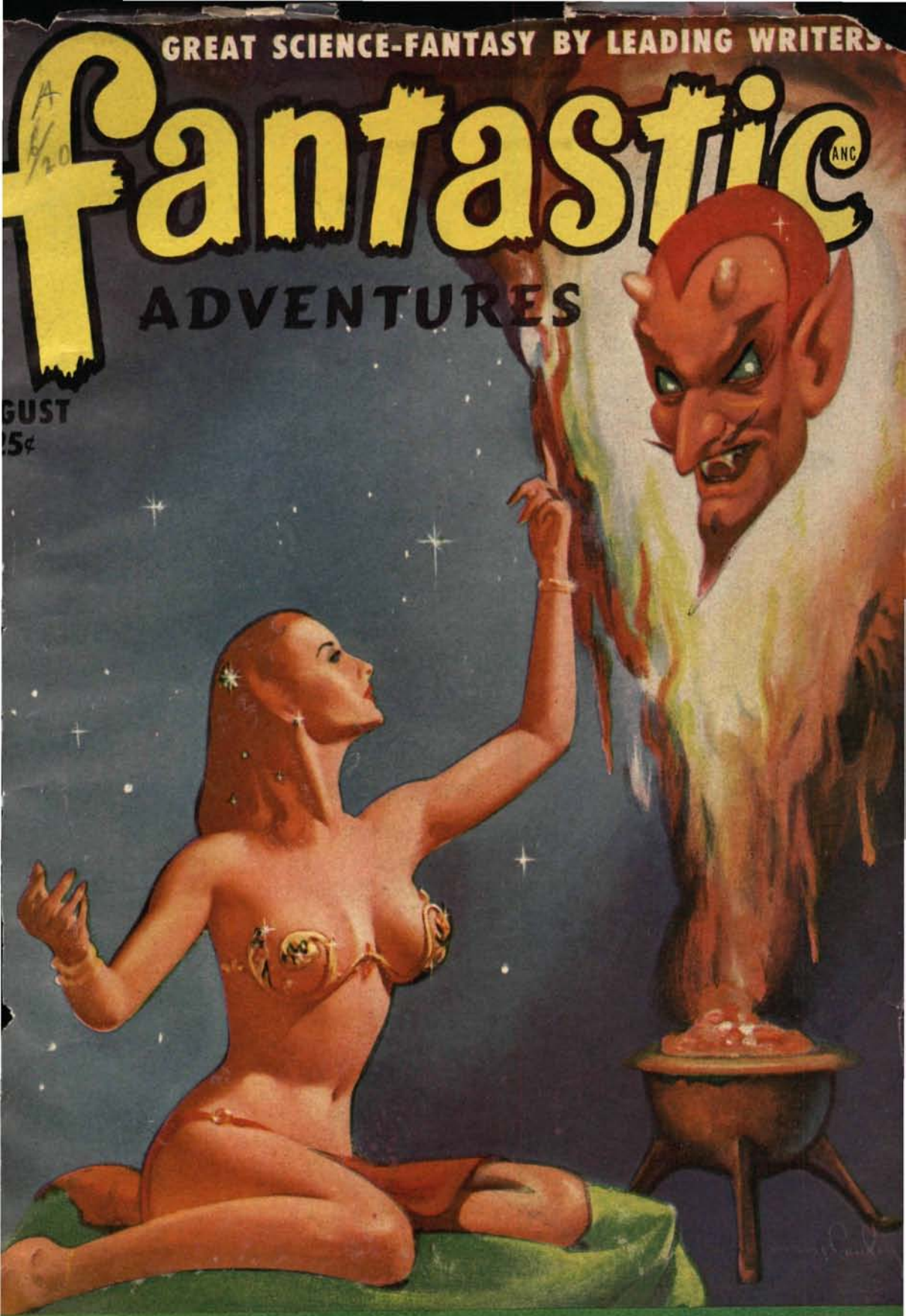
GREAT SCIENCE-FANTASY BY LEADING WRITERS

fantastic ANC

ADVENTURES

GUST
25¢



...en necromancy takes a holiday, it's . . .

THE DEVIL WITH YOU !"

By ROBERT BLOCH

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for 24 YEARS AMAZING STORIES

has UNLOCKED THE SECRETS OF SCIENCE

. . . the Atom Bomb first exploded in the pages of AMAZING STORIES . . . mysterious Flying Disks swept across the pages of this prophetic magazine years before startled eyes viewed them in the skies . . .

There's not one accepted miracle of today which was not foretold in AMAZING STORIES.

Each monthly issue is an exciting glimpse into the astonishing science world of tomorrow, a thrilling document of truths-to-come—revealed in fictional form to provide entertainment for inquiring minds.

Read AMAZING STORIES

THE WORLD'S GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

AT YOUR NEWSSTAND EVERY MONTH

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO AMAZING STORIES for 1 YEAR

WITH THE PURCHASE OF ANY TWO OUTSTANDING BOOKS

SPECIAL *Get-Aquainted Offer*. We will send you FREE, one full year's subscription to Amazing Stories with your purchase of ANY TWO of the best selling weird, Fantastic or Anthological books listed below. This special offer is made so we can acquaint you with the READERS SERVICE BOOK CLUB. In addition to getting books at rock bottom prices you also enjoy FREE book bonuses. BUY WHEN YOU PLEASE . . . order only when you see the title you desire. Your order will receive immediate attention, bringing you two of these great novels PLUS a FREE One Year Subscription at NO EXTRA COST.

BEST SELLING POPULAR AND FANTASTIC NOVELS

156.	People of the Comet—Austin Hall	$2.00
281.	The Kid from Mars—Oscar J. Friend	2.50
291.	The Last Space Ship—Murray Leinster	2.50
314.	The Star Kings—Edmond Hamilton	2.50
299.	Sixth Column—Robert Heinlein	2.50
328.	Pattern for Conquest—George Smith	2.50
176.	Death's Deputy—L. Ron Hubbard	2.50
246.	Exiles of Time—Nelson Bond	2.50
243.	The Homunculus—David H. Keller	2.50
146.	The Torch—Beehdolt	2.50
327.	Murder Madness—Murray Leinster	2.75
316.	Stellar Missiles—Ed Earl Repp	2.75
233.	Nomad—George O. Smith	3.00
210.	Lords of Creation—Eando Binder	3.00
248.	The Incredible Planet—John Campbell, Jr	3.00
325.	First Lensmen—E. E. Smith	3.00
213.	Seven Out of Time—Arthur Zagat	3.00
221.	Planets of Adventure—Basil Wells	3.00
200.	Divide and Rule—Sprague de Camp	3.00
223.	Worlds of Wonder—Stapledon	3.00
157.	Beyond this Horizon—Heinlein	3.00
234.	Sidewise in Time—Murray Leinster	3.00
170.	Sinister Barrier—Eric Russell	3.00
351.	The Man Who Sold the Moon—Heinlein	3.00
300.	Kingslayer—L. Ron Hubbard	3.00
247.	The 31st of February—Nelson Bond	3.00
189.	The Carnelian Cube—Pratt & de Camp	3.00
181.	Slaves of Sleep—L. Ron Hubbard	3.00
214.	Wheels of If—L. Sprague de Camp	3.00
217.	The Radium Pool—Ed. Repp	3.00
222.	The Triton—L. Ron Hubbard	3.00
182.	Without Sorcery—Theadore Sturgeon	3.00
308.	Something About Cats & Others—Lovecraft	3.00
310.	The Throne of Saturn—S. Fowler Wright	3.00
204.	Not Long for this World—Derleth	3.00
268.	The World Below—S. Fowler Wright	3.50

ANTHOLOGIES

280.	Best Science Fiction Stories 1949	$2.95
348.	Men Against the Stars—ed. by M. Greenberg	2.95
103.	A Treasury of Science Fiction—ed. by Conklin	3.00
353.	Omnibus of Time—Ralph Farley	3.50
355.	Best of Science Fiction—ed. Conklin	3.50
235.	The Other Side of the Moon—ed. Derleth	3.75
140.	Strange Ports of Call—ed. Derleth	3.75
324.	My Best Science Fiction Story	3.95

MAIL COUPON TODAY !!

Readers Service Book Club, Dept. Z-6,
119 E. San Fernando St., San Jose 21, Calif.

Circle the books you want. Send cash or order C.O.D. plus postage.

156	328	327	325	157	247	222	268	355
281	176	316	213	284	189	182	280	235
291	246	233	221	170	181	308	348	140
314	243	210	200	351	214	310	103	324
299	146	248	223	300	217	204	353	

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fantastic ADVENTURES

AUGUST, 1950

Trade Mark Registered U. S. Patent Office No. 373844

WILLIAM B. ZIFF
Chairman of the Board and Publisher

B. G. DAVIS
President

Vice-Presidents:
MICHAEL H. FROELICH
Dir. Eastern Division

H. J. MORGANROTH
Production Director

H. G. STRONG
Circulation Director

Secretary-Treasurer
A. T. PULLEN

Art Director
HERMAN R. BOLLIN

Editor
HOWARD BROWNE

Managing Editor
WILLIAM L. HAMLING

Associate Editor
LILA SHAFFER

Art Editor
BRAD PENDLETON

All Features Complete

THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK
By The Editor 6

WONDER DRUG
By H. R. Stanton 69

THE MENTANICAL PETS
By Carter T. Wainwright 69

CRYSTALLINE POWER PLANT
By A. T. Kedzie 88

THE URANIAN EMISSARY
By Milton Matthews 89

"SHAKE" ANALYZER
By L. A. Burt 115

TAILORED ISOTOPES
By Jon Barry 115

SUPER RAMJETS
By Charles Recour 125

WARFARE BY THE SUN!
By Sandy Miller 136

THE END IS NOT YET...
By William Karney 136

FLYING SAUCER SCIENTIST
By Leslie Phelps 137

ARCTIC BUBBLE
By John Weston 137

UNDERGROUND BOILER
By Ramsey Sinclair 149

THE VENUSIAN "COLLISION"
By J. R. Marks 149

READER'S PAGE
By The Readers 150

RADIATION "FEELER"
By A. Morris 156

FABLES FROM THE FUTURE
By Lee Owens 157

Published monthly by ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY at 185 North Wabash Ave., Chicago 1, Ill. New York Office, New York 17, N. Y. Entered as second class matter June 3, 1947 at the Post Office Chicago, Illinois under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional second class entry, Holyoke, Massachusetts. Subscription: in U. S. Possessions $2.50 for 12 issues, all other foreign countries, $3.50 for 12 issues. Subscribers should allow at least two weeks for change of address. All communications about subscriptions should be addressed to the Director of Circulation, Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 185 North Wabash Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 8

All Stories Complete

"THE DEVIL WITH YOU!" (Short Novel—36,500) ..... by Robert Bloch 8
Illustrated by H. W. McCauley
Room Service is a usual hotel accomodation—and the Flopmoor added a ghost to each room!

WINDOW TO THE PAST (Novelette—12,000) ..... by Chester S. Geier 70
Illustrated by Virgil Finlay
The window presented a problem to Delmar: he didn't want to open it—just pass through it...

"WELL I'LL BE HEXED!" (Novelette—13,000) ..... by Peter Phillips 90
Illustrated by Henry Sharp
The little man claimed to have certain magical powers—but Bertram didn't believe a word of it!

WHERE TALL TOWERS GLEAM (Short—5,000) ..... by Robert Moore Williams 116
Illustrated by Robert Gibson Jones
The man showed Dick and Kathie the city in the far-off sky—and just how to reach it...

SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A DOG (Short—5,000) ..... by Frances M. Deegan 126
Illustrated by W. H. Hinton
Johnny could match wits with any human on Earth—which was quite unusual for a dog!

"YOUR ROPE IS WAITING!" (Short—6,000) ..... by William Brengle 138
Illustrated by Henry Sharp
His plan to murder was perfect—but he forgot that a rope can fit more than one neck!...

Front cover painting by H. W. McCauley, Illustrating
a scene from "The Devil With You!"

Copyright, 1950, ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations
We do not accept responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. To facilitate handling, the author should enclose a self-addressed envelope with the requisite postage attached and artists should enclose or forward return postage. Accepted material is subject to whatever revision is necessary to meet requirements. Payment covers all authors' contributors' and contestants' magazine rights in the U.S.A. and all other countries in the article and/or illustrations and for publicity and promotion in connection therewith and will be made at our current rates upon acceptance. All photos and drawings will be considered as part of material purchased. The names of all characters that are used in short stories, serials and semi-fiction articles that deal with types are fictitious. Use of a name that is the same as that of any living person is coincidental.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

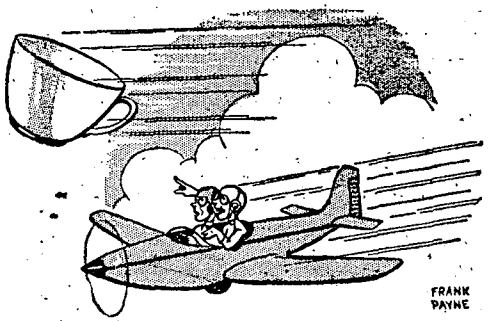
The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

PERHAPS this is not in keeping with an FA editorial, since we're going to start off this month by mentioning our big sister publication, AMAZING STORIES—but we've got something worth mentioning, so here goes. Next year marks the Silver Anniversary of "The Aristocrat of Science Fiction". For twenty-five years AS has been the leader in its field. During that time the magazine has undergone relatively few important changes in format, this being especially true during the last decade. We've won countless thousands of new and enthusiastic readers (to both AS and FA) and the popularity of AMAZING continues to grow. But now comes our big Anniversary year. And we intend to celebrate it along with you readers. How?

AMAZING STORIES is going slick. Our plans call for a large size magazine, with color work on interiors and the wordage of each issue practically doubled. We want to bring you the first slick stf book the world has ever known—and what better magazine to present this new format than the world's best! You'll read stories and fact feature articles by men such as Robert Heinlein, Willy Ley, L. Ron Hubbard, L. Sprague de Camp, Fletcher Pratt, Ray Bradbury, A. E. Van Vogt, Theodore Sturgeon, and—but need we go on? That's it, the stellar writers in the stellar magazine.

JUST WHEN will we give the announcement of the first big issue to hit the stands? Keep watching both AS and FA for news along these lines. You'll be hearing about it very soon.



"Just forget about it—they wouldn't believe us anyway!"

AND WHAT OF FA? You'll continue to get the same fine magazine you always have—but with even finer material. For instance, we've just scheduled L. Ron Hubbard's great new novel, THE MASTERS OF SLEEP. This is the long awaited sequel to his famous SLAVES OF SLEEP, available in book form. When we say this is a fine story, we are, if anything, understating the fact. An L. Ron Hubbard novel is always big news. You'll find it in our October issue.

THEN THERE'S a new novel by our own pride and joy, Geoff St. Reynard. We've already mentioned in the past that St. Reynard is a pen-name for Robert W. Krepps who has a steady stream of serious novels on the Rinehart list. Under his very well known stf by-line, Geoff now presents MISTRESS OF THE DJINN, as fine a piece of science-fantasy as you've ever read. Then of course there's Lester del Rey who's even now coming through with a new novel. Need we go on? Just reflect back on the past few issues of FA. There's Robert Bloch in the current issue; Fritz Leiber last month; Charles F. Myers the previous issue—and the top headliners coming up. So while FA is holding its present format and AS is making the wonderful change to a slick status, you'll find that FA is not going to suffer for want of the best material money can buy for your reading enjoyment. *Nothing But The Best* is a Ziff-Davis byword.

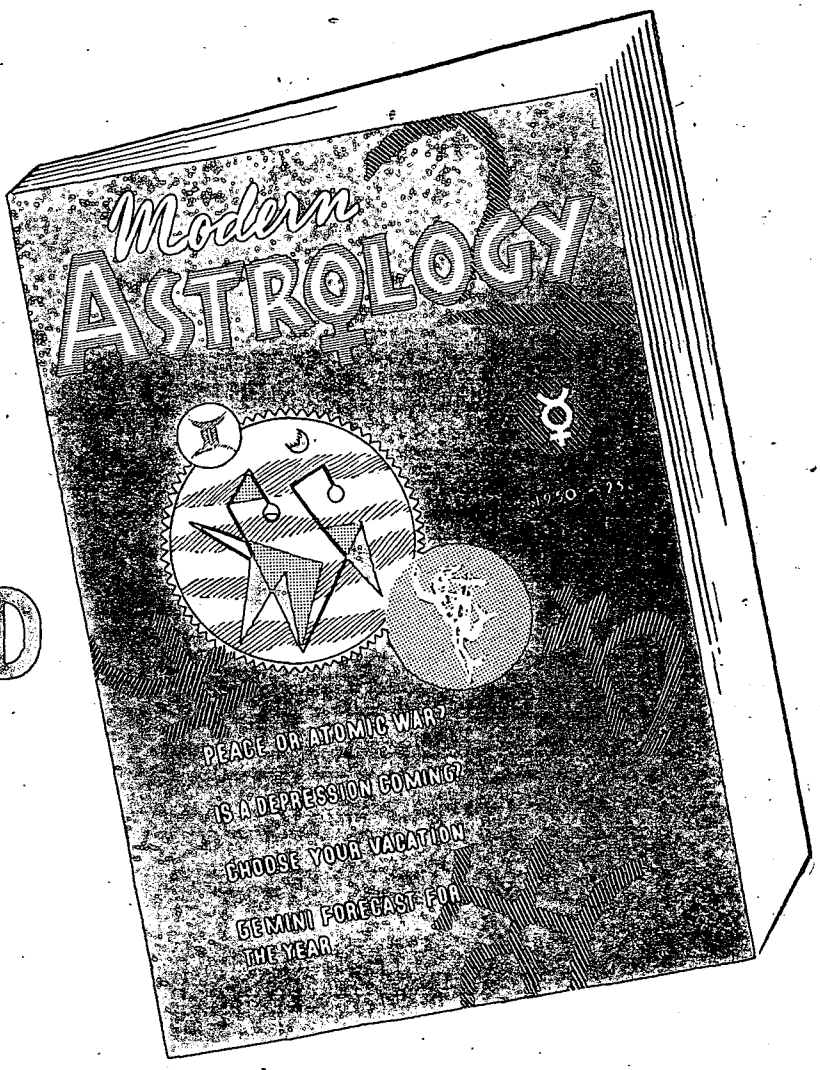
WE JUST got a phone call from Rog Phillips relating some interesting news that we'd like to pass along to you. Rog has been negotiating with one of the top radio networks on a science fiction radio series for a national hookup. Rog just told us that the first script for that series has been passed on with enthusiastic approval. So it looks like you'll be hearing Rog Phillips' stories on the air very soon. All of which goes to show how popular science fiction is getting these days.

THE THOUGHT just struck us that the cartoon on this page would have gone very well with our editorial last month. It came in too late to use with that issue, but the connection is worth mentioning. Nope, that ain't no tongue in our cheek!.....

WLH

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LOOK AHEAD WITH



Do you seek guidance—are you one who dares to look beyond today into the mysteries of the future?—Will we have peace—or atomic war? How soon will we travel to distant planets—what about the weather—business conditions—your personal relationships? Look ahead, find truth and guidance, each month in MODERN ASTROLOGY. Join the thousands of serious astrological readers who have welcomed MODERN ASTROLOGY's new and daring approach to one of the world's most ancient studies.

JULY ISSUE ON SALE AT YOUR NEWSSTANDS JUNE 16th • 25¢ per copy

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Did unearthly figures actually ride the night wind, sweeping down upon the sleeping city?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The Devil With You!"

By Robert Bloch

When the magicians descended on the Hotel Flopmoor for their annual convention they decided to raise hell—literally! . . .

IT MUST have been the fickle finger of Fate.

There is no other explanation possible. It was the fickle finger of Fate, moving at random over the map, which descended upon Davenport, Iowa, plunged through the roof of Moe Hare's Furniture Factory, tapped Bill Dawson on the head and granted him a two-week vacation with absolutely nothing to do.

Destiny's capricious phalange pointed the way to New York, and Bill went there. After all, why not? He was twenty-six, an orphan, unattached, and he'd been reading back issues of *The New Yorker* at the public library for years. It might be a fine place to spend a vacation. So Bill reasoned, or thought he reasoned—but actually, it was Fate's fingernail scratching away inside his brain.

It followed him on his trip, sat up with him on the day-coach, yanked him into a taxicab at Grand Central, and directed him at random to one of the big city's famed hostelries—the Hotel Flopmoor by name. The fickle finger guided his hand as he registered, indicating room 522. It notched into his collar, guided him through the streets that first evening, and turned his head away from any sights that might prove interesting.

Fate had plans for Mr. Bill Dawson—big plans. And the finger was very definitely on him. It rode back up with Bill on the elevator that night, after a stroll down 42nd Street. It almost helped him undress, in its eagerness to get him into bed. As a last gesture, it was the fickle finger of Fate that tucked the covers around Bill's neck and stroked his forehead into a dreamless sleep.

At least, Bill thought it was dream-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less, until he opened his eyes. It seemed as if his wristwatch indicated midnight. It seemed as though somebody had switched on the bedlamp. It seemed as though there was a stranger in bed with him.

Bill lay on his side and stared. Yes, there was a man lying in bed beside him—a long, thin man whose long, thin legs were desperately tangled in the blankets.

The long, thin man had a long, thin face, and his sardonic grey eyes snapped behind gleaming spectacles as he favored Bill with a long, thin smile.

"Pardon me," said the intruder. "I don't believe we've met. My name is Marmaduke Hicks."

BILL GOGGLED, but not for long. For a second voice came from somewhere behind his back. Bill whirled in the bed. To his utter dismay he found himself staring into another face lying on that side; a fat, moon-face, supported by a pudgy body. The smiling little fat man brushed a chubby hand through a tangle of red hair. He ignored Bill's gaze and peered over at the thin gentleman.

"Hicks!" he shouted, cordially. "How did you get here?"

"Crawled through the transom, Tubby."

"Good for you," said Tubby. "I've been hiding in the closet for ever so long. Think he's spotted us?"

"Who? You mean old Bipple? He's too drunk."

"I wish I was," said the fat man, wistfully. "I've never been too drunk." He smiled at Bill. "Pardon me, stranger, but you don't happen to have a little something around, do you?

Bill sat up in bed and grimaced.

"Anti-social, eh?" grunted Mr. Hicks. "Guess there's nothing we can do about it, then."

"You can get out of my bed," Bill suggested. "I want to go to sleep."

"Hear that, Hicks?" asked the fat man. "He wants to sleep."

"Well, let him. I'm sure I won't disturb the lazy swine. But it's a fine thing, I must say, when a host hasn't the simple courtesy to stay awake and entertain guests when they drop in on him."

"We could sing him a lullaby," suggested Tubby, with elaborate irony. "Or tell him a bedtime story."

"Listen here," Bill grated. "I don't know who you are or what you're doing in my room, but you'll have to get out. You two are either drunk or crazy, and I don't care which."

"I care," replied Mr. Hicks. "And I'd much rather be drunk. Come to think of it, I am."

"Now, look," Bill began—but his tirade was interrupted. An ominous knocking shook the door of the room.

"Open up in there!" shouted a voice.

"Good Lord," whispered Mr. Hicks. "It's Bipple!" He slithered down in the bed and pulled the covers over his head. The fat man attempted to follow suit, but too late. For a key grated in the lock and a man entered the room. He switched on the light, revealing his harsh, square-jawed countenance to Bill and Tubby.

"Aha!" The square jaw waggled accusingly. "Caught you! Telbertson, what are you doing in that bed?"

He addressed the fat man, who timidly squeaked out a reply. "That's a very personal question," he said. "But if you must know, I'm having a baby."

"Thieves! Swindlers! Deadbeats!" The manager's voice rose with each word. "For two years you've been sneaking from room to room in this hotel, moving in with guest after guest, ducking the house detective, ducking me. You have ruined my temper, broken my health, driven me to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the horrors of drink."

As if to prove his point, Manager Bipple produced a flask from his side pocket and gave a convincing imitation of a man being driven to drink. It needed no glance at his flushed face to see that this was not his first drink; only rage had kept him sober.

Tubby Telbertson and Marmaduke Hicks rose from the bed as one man and approached the manager. "Let's settle this affair man to man," Hicks coaxed. "Over a friendly drink."

He took the flask, used it, and passed it to Tubby. After a long time, the flask returned to Bipple, who drank again.

"You're a good sport," Hicks said.

"Am I?" asked the manager, with a tipsy giggle.

"Best sport I know. And I've got a sporting proposition for you. We owe you for two years of room rent. What say we play you for it—double or nothing?"

"Oh no you don't!"

Tubby patted the manager on the shoulder. "Come now, that isn't sportsman Bipple talking. Here, have another drink. You got the dice, Hicks?"

Hicks nodded.

"Well, suppose you phone room service for a quart of rye and some ginger ale?"

BIPPLE RAISED his hand to protest, but Hicks waved him aside with a gracious leer. "It goes on our bill, naturally," he explained. "Drinks on us. Well, let's get started."

Bill Dawson clambered out of bed and gathered his pajama tops about him in a flurry of righteous indignation. "You mean you're going to play dice here in my room?" he asked. "I demand that you get out and let me go to sleep. I don't know whose idea of a joke this is, but it's my room and I want you to leave."

"It's not your room." This, surprisingly enough from Bipple. "It's my room. I own this hotel and I can shoot dice wherever I please."

"Good old Bipple! Spoken like a true host!" Hicks patted the inebriated manager on the back, then squatted on the floor and produced a pair of dice. "Now, how much do we owe you?" he asked.

"Let's see." Bipple fumbled for a bill as Tubby phoned room service. "Ah, here we are. Comes to exac'ly four thousand, six hundred and forty-three dollars and fifty cents," Bipple droned. "That includes the liquor you just ordered, of course."

"Fair enough. Shall we say double or nothing?"

"Well—" Tipsy as he was, the manager hesitated. Bill chose that moment to open his mouth again.

"Get out of here!" he yelled. "Don't be a fool!"

"Nobody tells me what to do," Bipple retorted. "Of course I'll make it double 'r nothing. Whose dice?"

Hicks, Bipple and Tubby knelt and peered at the cubes. Tubby scooped them up in one pink paw and rattled them, rolled them in an ivory pattern across the rug.

"Seven!" the fat man shouted. And seven it was. "You lose, Bipple."

A tap on the door sent Bill on his way. He half-expected to see a couple of uniformed men bearing straitjackets, and in his present confusion he would probably have donned one himself. But it was only the bellboy bringing up the drinks.

The bellboy poured expertly, and before Bill could protest he found a tall glass of rye and soda thrust in his hand. He gulped air, then his drink. The bellboy stood smirking at him.

"Will that be all, sir?" he inquired.

Tubby nudged Mr. Hicks. "Wants his tip, I guess," he whispered.

Hicks nodded. "Look, boy," he be-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gan. "I'll shoot you for the tip. My dollar against your quarter."

"Well—" The bellboy hesitated.

"Go ahead," Bipple boomed, downing his rye with more alacrity than ginger-ale. "See what a sport I am? Just lost over four thousan' to my good friends here. Go ahead and shoot!"

THE BELLBOY squatted. Dice rolled. Bill edged closer. This was madness, but interesting.

"Three!" yelled Tubby. "You lose the quarter. Shoot you for another, same odds." The bellboy lost a dollar as fat little Mr. Telbertson's fingers thumped the dice in a savage war-dance to the Congo Goddess of Fortune.

And the rye changed hands. Bill, dazed, automatically accepted another drink. It descended on his stomach like a blazing meteor and he looked on with new interest. Thin Mr. Hicks was shaking now, and the bellboy had just lost his uniform.

Manager Bipple drew a roll of bills from his pocket and they disappeared as the dice were cast.

"Roll them?" offered Hicks to Bill. The young man took the dice in nerveless fingers.

"Drink up!" Bipple urged. "What you shooting for?"

"How about his hotel bill?" asked Hicks.

Bill cast a seven.

"You win!" Tubby nudged him and whispered, "Say fifty dollars on this one. Bill shot and made a six, then failed to make a nine. And Tubby had the dice again.

"I've got no money," Manager Bipple confessed, downing a drink. "You boys have cleaned me."

"Shoot you for the bridal suite," Tubby offered. "And two brides." He cast and threw an eleven.

"What a lucky dog!" moaned the manager. "I've lost our best rooms."

"Take the dice," Tubby urged, pressing the now overheated cubes into Bill's hand. "We've got to hold this winning streak."

"Nothing to bet any more," Bipple sighed, in drunken woe.

"Shoot him for the hotel," Hicks suggested to Bill. "Come on, Bipple, be a sport."

"Wager my hotel—are you crazy?" Bipple pleaded.

"Your hotel won't look much good after Tubby here tears out the bridal suite," Hicks reminded him. "Better get it back or lose the whole thing."

"All right," Bipple conceded. "It's a bet."

"Shoot him for the hotel, Bill," Tubby yelled. "Go ahead."

Bill's gaze was blurred, his hand was shaky. He threw the dice and watched them hit the rug through a haze. Four and—three.

"Seven!"

"You won!" Hicks exulted. "You won the hotel!"

"Well, isn't that nice," said Bill.

And promptly fainted.

WHEN BILL opened his eyes he expected everything to be all right. He'd be back in his comfortable bed, the two drunks and the manager would be gone, and the dream would be over.

As it happened, things proceeded a bit differently. To be exact, when Bill opened his eyes he got an ice-bucket of cold water full in the face.

"That'll bring him around," he heard Tubby mutter. "A little water always does the trick."

"Trick!" grumbled a voice Bill identified as belonging to Manager Bipple. "Don't mention that word to me."

Bill sat up and brushed the water from his face and pajama-tops with a towel Hicks thrust into his hand.

"I'm sorry," he said.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"For passing out?" Tubby chuckled. "Think nothing of it. I do it every night—eventually."

"No, not that." Bill strode over to Mr. Bipple. "I mean, about the dice game. Winning your hotel from you. Of course I wasn't serious. I have no intention of holding you to the bet."

Manager Bipple shook his head and smiled. "On the contrary, my dear boy, I insist! You won the hotel fair and square and it's all yours."

Bill blinked as he saw that Bipple was serious. Not so Mr. Hicks.

"This calls for a little drink," he said. "All that water makes me thirsty. Tubby, do the honors."

Tubby did. By the time Bill had donned dry pajama-tops the fresh highballs were ready, and so were his companions.

"Here's to our new manager!" Tubby toasted. "May he enjoy his stay here as much as we do."

"That's very generous of you," Bill said, thoughtfully, "but I'm not so sure. You see, I know nothing at all about running a hotel. It must be a pretty big job."

"Nothing to it," Hicks told him. "Calls for no intelligence at all. Look at Bipple here—he got away with it for years."

"But there's five hundred rooms in the Flopmoor. A ballroom and a banquet hall and dozens of bellboys and waiters and cooks and chambermaids—"

"—and millions of cockroaches," Tubby finished for him. "So what? They all know their jobs. All you have to do is sit back and watch the money roll in. My boy, you're in business."

"We'll stick around and help you out, too," Mr. Hicks offered. "I happen to be on friendly terms with most of the staff here—"

"—particularly the chambermaids," Tubby again concluded. "Yes, Bill, we won't let you down. So stop worrying and drink up, I say."

BILL DRANK up, but he didn't stop worrying. He turned to Mr. Bipple, painfully aware of a smug smile on that worthy's face.

"See here, Mr. Bipple," he said. "I may be the new owner of this hotel, but that doesn't mean I want to be the active manager. Suppose I make you a deal? You can name your own terms, if you like. How about staying on here as manager?"

To everyone's surprise, Bipple shook his head. The smile faded from his face and for a moment he seemed almost sober.

"No!" he declared. "Ab'slutely no! I'm getting out of here before tomorrow morning and that's that!"

"Wait," Marmaduke Hicks broke in. "What's the big idea? Why all the rush?"

"The Convention starts tomorrow," Bipple explained. "And I want no part of it."

"What Convention?"

"The Magician's Convention, that's what. And I'm getting out of here before they get in. You won't catch me going through what I did last year. Whassa matter, don't you remember it?"

"Come to think of it, Tubby and I weren't around that week last year. We went to Florida for a change and a rest."

"The nightclubs got our change," Tubby explained, "and the racetracks got the rest." He peered thoughtfully at Mr. Bipple over the top of his glass. "So that's it! I thought it was funny—you giving up the hotel so gracefully. You wanted to get away from this Convention, eh? Why?"

"You'll find out," Mr. Bipple assured him.

"But please," Bill broke in. "You can't rush off this way and leave me

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

holding the bag."

"What bag?" asked Mr. Hicks, with sudden interest. But Bill continued his plea.

"Surely it can't be so bad that you won't even tell me what to expect," he went on.

"It can!" Bipple shivered. "Why do you suppose I started drinking tonight? Even thinking about those awful magicians is enough to give me the shakes. You wanna know something? I'm glad I lost the hotel—glad, I tell you! Glad, glad, glad!" With each repetition of the word, Manager Bipple had edged closer to the door. Now he opened it and darted out into the hall.

"Goodbye!" he called. "And watch out for Dritch! Whatever you do, beware of Dritch!"

The door slammed behind him. Hicks stared at Tubby, who passed the look along to Bill.

"What's a Dritch?" he asked.

"I don't know," Hicks confessed. "But we'll find out. We'll find out lots of things; don't worry."

"But I am worried. I can't run this hotel alone."

"Tubby and I will help you. First thing to do, of course, is go down to the wine-cellar and take inventory."

"Never mind the wine-cellar. What I want to do is sit down and have a long talk with somebody who really knows the score about this hotel. The assistant manager or the *maitre de hotel,* some one like that. If we're expecting a convention tomorrow I should be prepared. And I'd like to find out what made Bipple so frightened of these magicians."

"This is no time of night to be thinking about conventions," Tubby grumbled. "Besides, all those people you mentioned must be home in bed. Or somewhere in bed, anyway."

"How about Annabel?" suggested the thin partner.

"The very thing!" Tubby exclaimed. "She's not in bed anywhere, is she? I mean, she's on duty downstairs all night."

"Well, call her and tell her to come on up."

"She might misunderstand."

"That wouldn't stop Annabel. Besides, you can always say the manager wants to see her."

Tubby wobbled over to the telephone and called.

Hicks offered Bill another drink. Bill's acceptance was almost automatic. Only a part of his mind seemed to be functioning; just enough for him to ask, "Who is this Annabel?"

"Old Bipple's niece. She runs the cigar counter in the lobby. One of our favorite people, that girl—you'll like her, wait and see."

"But why drag her up to my room in the middle of the night?"

"I could think of several reasons, all good," Hicks observed. "However, right now you want to talk to somebody about running this hotel. Annabel's your girl. She's been here for over a year and she knows the whole routine inside and out."

"She said she'll be right up," Tubby called, from the phone. "So we'd better mix another drink, fast."

THE PARTNERS mixed another drink, fast. Bill sat down on the bed and began to dress with equal haste. He felt, somehow, as though he were beginning to learn a lot about life in the raw, and wondered what he'd learn about life with clothes on.

He had learned about drinking, about gambling, about the pleasures of taking things easy. His education, however, still lacked one most important feature. No man is really educated until he knows about women. Therefore some schools of thought

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

maintain that no man is really educated.

At any rate, Bill Dawson was now about to discover an entire new section of existence—the eternal, infernal feminine.

There was a soft knock and the door opened. A girl entered the room.

"Hello, Annabel," Hicks cried, genially. "What took you so long?"

"Just stopped on the way for a drink and a chaser."

"Ten minutes just for a drink?"

"No. But it took me a while to get rid of the chaser. He was very persistent."

"Hi!" piped Tubby. "Just in time." He handed her a glass which she accepted eagerly. She peered over the rim at Bill.

"Who's the new face?" she inquired, casually.

"Excuse me," said Bill, rising. "My name's Bill Dawson."

"I'm Annabel Bipple."

"Pleased to meet you."

"You should be," the girl observed. For a moment they stood eyeing each other in appraising silence.

Bill saw that the girl was tall and slender, with the type of figure which is described by female fashion authorities as "interesting" and more exactly characterized by men in the form of a shrill whistle. Annabel's hair had evidently been offered a choice of becoming either blonde or auburn, and had finally adopted the best of both shades. Her face contained the usual combination of eyes, lips and nose. But behind that tilted nose was determination, beyond those full red lips was character, and beyond those deep violet eyes lay a strange new world of hidden, whimsical beauty. A lovely girl but somehow dangerous, Bill decided.

Annabel, meanwhile, was critically interested in this strange staring creature before her. He was tall, blond and young—but there are many men who answer to that description. Yet for some inexplicable reason, Bill intrigued her. She decided it must be his face. There was something incomplete, unfinished, about it; something missing in the man's eyes. He looked unawakened and lonely.

Among Annabel's many weaknesses was a liking for unfortunates. Despite her carefully-calculated air of hardness and sophistication, she was a sucker for pigeons, alley-cats, and lost dogs. And this was surely one of the lost dogs of the world. The realization that she felt an instant attraction towards this man caused her to adopt an air of defensive mockery. She knew she had designs on this man, and she was a finished artist. Consequently, Bill was already a finished man.

Annabel broke the silence at last. Furious with herself for feeling sympathetic, she disguised her attitude in an outward insolence. "Well," she asked, "have you finished your inspection? Or must I go into my dance?"

"You were staring at me, too," Bill flashed, defensively.

"Was I? Well you can hardly blame me. Who is this creature, Hicks? Did you suddenly decide to start a rescue mission?"

"Not at all," the tall gentleman assured her. "As a matter of fact, Bill is the new manager of the Flopmoor."

CAREFULLY, Hicks explained to her just what had happened earlier in the evening. Annabel listened closely and nodded.

"What a tragedy," she mused. "My poor uncle out of a job and the whole hotel at the mercy of this—this—"

"Hey," Bill interrupted. "It's not that bad. After all, I'm not a complete idiot."

"You mean there's something missing?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Please, no insults. After all, this may come as quite a shock to you—I mean, about your uncle and all—but at least you might be courteous about it."

"I am courteous," Annabel observed, deliberately goading him into a rage. "Otherwise I'd probably burst out laughing whenever I looked at you, you long-legged squirt."

"Who's a long-legged squirt?"

"You are."

"Listen," said Bill, goaded by alcohol and exasperation alike. "Nobody can get away with calling me a name like that. I have half a mind to do something about it."

"You may have half a mind," the girl retorted, "but what can you do about it?"

Bill stepped forward, grabbed the bewildered Annabel by the shoulders, propelled her to a chair, sat down, turned her over, and applied the palm of his hand repeatedly to the most likely available spot.

"This is what they do in the movies," he muttered, grimly.

"Well, I'll never go to the movies with you," the girl gasped. Then, "Ouch—you're hurting me!" Her hardboiled exterior was breaking down rapidly. So, she feared, was something else.

"Squirt, eh?" Bill muttered. "I'll show you!" He emphasized each word with a hearty whack.

"Oh," fumed the enraged girl, "You'll pay for this!"

Bill released her suddenly and she slid to the floor. For a moment Annabel sat there stupefied, then her violet eyes misted and she indulged in the common feminine reaction. Somewhat awkwardly, Bill knelt beside her and proferred his handkerchief.

"Blow," he suggested, chivalrously.

When Annabel's eyes were clear again she looked at the young man with deeper insight. She had never expected anything like this, and it knocked out her plans for casual dalliance completely. This man might be a lost dog, but he knew his way around. He had, she mused, rising and patting herself gingerly, left his mark on her.

"I'm sorry," Bill said. "Guess I lost my temper."

"That's all right. I deserved it." The words came out before she could stop them.

"Let's be friends," Bill placated. "Forget all about this."

"Right." Annabel turned to Tubby. "Quit staring at me, you little rounder, and mix up some drinks."

"Coming right up," Tubby announced. Hicks, whose mouth was never closed except around the neck of a bottle, looked amiably at Bill and Annabel.

"Glad you two have decided to make up," he said. "Looks like you hit it off all right."

"Let's forget about hitting, if you don't mind," Annabel begged. "It brings back all-too tender memories."

"We have other problems," Hicks agreed. "Such as running this hotel. Don't forget, the convention arrives tomorrow—for that matter, I'll bet most of the magicians checked in tonight. We'll have to figure out what to do."

"The Magician's Convention?" Annabel jumped up. "No wonder my uncle left so suddenly."

"Then you know something? All we could get out of him was a few hints."

"That's plenty. Plenty for me." The girl started for the door. "Excuse me, I have to pack."

"Please—you can't run out on us now," Tubby begged.

"I'm relying on you to show me the ropes," Bill added.

"It would be a pleasure," declared the girl. "But this convention is an-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other matter. Whenever I think about last year; I feel like going to bed and pulling the covers over my head."

"A fine idea," Hicks leered. "Go right ahead."

"Never mind that. I'm serious."

"But what about those magicians?" Bill persisted. "What did they do that's so awful?"

"What didn't they do? For three days this hotel was full of rabbits and white mice and black cats and pigeons. The cats chased the mice and the pigeons chased the people."

"What about the rabbits?"

"They chased each other. It was a mess. And all those prestidigitators, pulling knives and forks out of their sleeves in the dining room and changing the color of peoples' drinks in the bar, and making the potted palms in the lobby grow before your eyes—you never saw anything like it."

"Sounds like fun," Bill mused. "Why is everybody so scared of a thing like that?"

"Dritch," sighed Annabel.

"Dritch? Seems to me Mr. Bipple was using that word. What on earth is a Dritch?"

"It isn't *a* Dritch, it's Mr. Dritch. And I'm not so sure he's on earth."

"Huh?"

"He's a terrible little man—or maybe not a man."

"I'm getting more confused every minute," Bill declared.

"So were we, during the last convention. He showed up and took a room, him and his beard. And his friends. I don't know which was the worst—his beard or his friends. We tangled with both of them. The important thing is, nobody has been able to use that room since."

"Why?"

"Because," whispered Annabel, "it's haunted!"

SEVERAL drinks later, the party went down to the lobby and approached the night clerk at the desk.

"It's my duty as manager," Bill had persisted. "Besides, if this Dritch shows up again this year, I want to know what he's been doing."

As for Hicks and Tubby, they were only too willing to co-operate, particularly after the last of the whiskey was gone.

Annabel stayed discreetly in the background. Not seeing her, the clerk assumed the men to be strangers.

"I'm sorry," he said, looking up from his ledger. "I'm afraid I'm out of rooms."

"Aren't you in one now?" Hicks quibbled.

"No, gentlemen, you don't understand. There's a convention in town and we're all full."

"So is the convention," muttered Tubby, unhelpfully. "But never mind that now. We want the key to the haunted room."

"What?"

"I'm the new manager," Bill offered. "Didn't Mr. Bipple tell you?"

"Oh—Mr. Dawson!" The clerk beamed. "Yes, Mr. Bipple did mention your name in passing. But he passed awfully fast. I never saw a man leave this hotel in such a hurry. You'd have thought the Devil himself was at his heels. And come to think of it, with this particular convention coming up—" The clerk shrugged eloquently. "Seeing as you're the new manager, I'd better warn you. These magicians are a pretty queer bunch. Particularly Mr. Dritch, that little man with the beard. Mr. L. Dritch, he called himself, and—"

"Blast Mr. Dritch!" Bill exploded. "That's all I hear around here. All I want is the key to the haunted room."

"Please, don't go up there," warned the clerk. "It hasn't been opened for a year. The chambermaids say there's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something terribly wrong with the furniture, and other things."

"I've been in plenty of hotel rooms," Hicks remarked, "and none of them were haunted by anything worse than bedbugs."

"Remember, sir, I warned you. I take no responsibility."

"Pooh to your ghosts," Tubby sneered, brandishing a bottle. "Look, we're bringing our own spirits."

"Very well, then." The clerk produced a key. "But let me know if you see any astral phenomena. Or anything that might be construed as partly astral."

"Half-astral, even," Hicks nodded. "Very well, as you say. Let's go."

Brandishing the key to Room 1013, Bill and the partners joined Annabel and made for the elevator. A bellboy stepped forward and accosted Bill.

"Carry your baggage, mister?" he inquired.

"No thanks," said Annabel. "I'll walk." The party whisked into the elevator and ascended. Bill found himself suddenly quite nervous; partly because of the nature of their coming adventure and partly because of the close proximity of Annabel. The lively young lady and her livelier companions had already done strange things to him, and he feared that if they sowed any more wild oats he might be ploughed under in the process.

Room 1013 proved on first glance to be a spacious apartment with a large number of chairs, several handsome tables, and a fine sofa. There was also a massive bed.

"Looks comfortable enough," Tubby commented. "Certainly can't see anything wrong with this set-up."

"Speaking of set-ups," Hicks said, "that reminds me. Where's the bottle?" Tubby produced a fifth; Bill switched on all the lights and closed the door, and Annabel pulled the shades. The room was still for a moment as they instinctively waited for something to happen. Nothing did. Silently, Hicks passed the bottle around. Gurgling, then more silence.

"Well," sighed Bill, "let's make ourselves comfortable and wait for developments." Suiting action to word, he lowered himself into the nearest chair.

"Hey, be careful!" came a voice out of nowhere. "Who do you think you're sitting on?"

Bill hastened to rise. "What's this?" he gasped.

"An order, buddy," continued the soft, deep voice. "Don't sit on me."

Bill appealed to his companions. "Am I crazy, or did that chair just speak to me?"

"I wouldn't vouch for your sanity, brother," purred the voice, "but I certainly did speak to you. I'm sick and tired of having strangers flop all over my lap."

The partners goggled. "A talking chair," said Annabel. "So that's what's been going on here."

"You can sit on my lap anytime, sister," the chair beguiled.

"Why not?" A new voice chimed in, from the direction of the sofa in the corner. "Drape yourself all over, if you like. This one is on me." The invitation was followed by a gurgle of low laughter.

THE MEN listened to this unusual suggestion with mounting apprehension. Only Annabel showed no dismay. She turned to the sofa in defiance. "One more crack like that," she warned, "and I'll knock the stuffing out of you."

She had scarcely finished speaking when a pillow detached itself from the sofa and sailed through the air, striking her smartly on the head.

"Hold it, sister," the sofa advised, calmly. "I'm liable to get rough."

Annabel huddled in the center of the room. "I'm beginning to understand what they meant by a haunted

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

room, all right."

"I'm not," Tubby complained. "But I'm afraid I will unless I have another drink." He set the fifth of whiskey on a small table and turned to his companions. "Have a shot," he invited.

"Thanks," said a voice behind him. "Don't mind if I do." Tubby turned just in time to see the bottle upset itself and pour whiskey on the table's surface, which absorbed the liquor rapidly.

"Wheeee!" chortled the voice. "This is better than furniture polish. Now have one on me."

Tubby was trembling, but he managed to snatch the bottle before it emptied further. He drank and the others quickly followed his example.

"I don't understand it," Bill whispered. "Could we possibly have a ventriloquist in the crowd?"

"No," said the chair. "It's a pity, though—you'd make a lovely dummy."

Bill's temper gave way for a second time that evening. "Shut up!" he told the chair. "I'd like to break your legs."

"You and who else?" jeered the furniture.

"Yes," added a large, feminine-looking bureau in the corner. "Lay off the rough stuff," it continued in a girlish voice.

Bill regarded the bureau with a menacing eye. Then, "How would you like a good kick in the drawers?" he demanded.

A shrill burst of laughter greeted this remark. "Why you fresh thing!" taunted the bureau. "That's no way to speak to a lady."

Goaded beyond belief by this insane conversation with wood-work, Bill forgot what he was saying or doing. "Lady indeed!" he shouted. "Look at those drawers. Great knobby things! Besides, they're half-open."

"What a thing to say!" shrieked the voice.

Bill turned to his friends. "Let's get out of here," he panted. "Talking furniture—haunted rooms—I've had just about all I can take for one evening."

At that moment came a furious knocking at the door. Half-suspecting a trick, Mr. Hicks gingerly turned the knob. Two women promptly entered.

"Is this the room where they're holding the party?" demanded the taller of the two. "Somebody called the bar and invited us up—some magician, he said it was."

"Called himself the Great Little," volunteered the second girl. "Great Little what, he didn't say."

"Oh Lord!" groaned the spectacled man, and turned to his friends with a hasty whisper. "We can't let word get around about the furniture, I suppose. Might as well invite them in for a minute or they'll get suspicious." He faced the women again with assumed gaiety. "All right, come on in," he invited. "This is the party, and we're always glad to have company." He indicated Tubby. "Meet the Great Little himself. The other two are his assistants. As for me, I'm Marmaduke the Magnificent. And that thing over there is a bottle of whiskey. Shall we get acquainted with it?"

Introductions were accomplished and drinks were poured, while the furniture remained mercifully silent. Tall blonde and short blonde gravitated to Hicks and Tubby, and Hicks and Tubby gravitated towards the furniture, soon forgetting their recent experiences as the drinks went round.

WITHOUT thinking, Tubby invited the short blonde to sit on the sofa with him. Bill tried to signal, but Tubby didn't notice.

"My," murmured Tubby's girl, patting the mohair. "What an elegantly upholstered sofa."

"You're pretty well upholstered yourself," muttered a muffled voice

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from somewhere below.

"What was that?" asked the girl.

"Oh, nothing," Tubby gasped. "I think my voice is changing—getting much lower, lately."

"So are your topics of conversation," the girl told him.

Hicks had escorted his blonde to a large chair. When she was seated, he twined his angular body over the side and put his arm around the girl. Suddenly the young lady uttered a shrill squeal.

"Why, what a way to act!"

"Did I do anything wrong?" Hicks asked, innocently.

The girl regarded him with a strange glint in her mascara-laden eyes. "You didn't do anything any good," she confessed. In a moment she squealed again and jumped up from the chair.

"Am I offending you, somehow? Hurting your feelings?"

"You hurt more than that," the girl declared, furiously. She stared down with a puzzled expression. "You couldn't have, though," she mused. "I was watching this time, and you didn't pinch me. Unless—say, it couldn't have been the *chair* now, could it?"

She appealed to Hicks, but the chair supplied its own answer.

"You bet it was, baby," it chuckled. "I haven't had so much fun since the time I caught a Congressman."

The blonde gaped at the laughing furniture with awe in her eyes. Then she turned to Hicks again.

"Pinch me quick to see if I'm dreaming," she begged. Then, hastily, "No—don't. I've been pinched enough as it is!"

The chair guffawed.

The other blonde rose and approached her companion. "Let's get out of here," she suggested. "This place is creepy."

Her companion shrugged. "It's all a gag," she decided. "Don't forget, these fellows are magicians." And in a lower voice, she quickly added, "Besides, they have plenty of liquor. What can we lose. Let them have their fun."

Hicks and Tubby were by this time sufficiently bottle-weary to accept any situation, and Annabel seemed content to be anywhere as long as Bill was present. As for Bill himself, he was in no condition to object. Each outburst from the furniture had been an excuse for him to refresh himself from the bottle; now he no longer cared if the furniture talked or not. In fact, it was beginning to seem natural.

Since the women didn't appear to be upset by the queer room, the party made up its mind after another drink. "It's a nice place we have," Hicks announced, stubbornly. "We'll stay here, and phooey to the furniture!"

"The same to you, buddy," boomed a voice from the washroom.

"Aw, shut your trap!" rejoined the thin man.

"Let's order more drinks," his blonde girl-friend now suggested. "This looks like a real party."

Bill went to the phone and jiggled the receiver.

"Let go of me!" the mouthpiece scolded.

Bill ignored its chattering as he contacted room service—a brunette switchboard operator he remembered seeing in the lobby.

"Hello," he began, brightly. "This is Room 1013. Send us up a fifth of rye, if you please."

"Make that two fifths, you cheapskate," the phone cut in.

"What?" asked the switchboard operator.

"I didn't say anything."

"Do you ever?" This from the phone.

"See here," Bill shouted. "One more remark out of you and I'll disconnect your wiring. I'll tangle your batteries."

"What's that?" asked the switchboard girl.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm not talking to you," Bill explained. "I mean, I am talking to you, but—"

"Is there another party on the line?" the girl asked.

"This party is bad enough in itself," the phone put in, promptly. "At least it's as bad as it could be without you being present, you trull!"

"See here," said the girl at the desk, in repressed fury. "Are you trying to insult me?"

"That's pretty hard to do over the phone, baby," shot back the voice. "However, if you must be insulted, come on up."

This was too much for Bill. With an oath he ripped the offending telephone from the wall and tottered away.

HIS COMPANIONS weren't making out much better, he discovered. The chairs refused to be sat on. Whenever one of the gathering attempted to lodge in a seat, they were promptly booted from behind and thrown to the floor, where the sofa pelted them with cushions.

Bill tried to sit on the latter with Annabel, and it promptly overturned, grumbling in a loud voice about "lounge lizards!"

Panic gripped the party, and almost by instinct the three men and the three girls huddled together in the center of the room as the furniture laughed and jeered in wooden accents.

Suddenly the table rose and sailed gracefully over their heads. Everyone ducked until it landed against the other wall.

"Maybe it serves us right," Tubby whispered. "I've smashed a lot of furniture in my time—can't blame furniture for wanting to smash me."

"Certainly turning the tables on us," Hicks agreed. "If some of those spiritualist mediums could only see this!"

Bill was not taking matters so calmly. "Let's get out of here," he snapped. He crawled over to the door and tugged at the knob. The door refused to budge.

"Open up!" he shouted.

"Closed for the night," echoed a hollow voice from the keyhole. Bill tugged desperately, but nothing happened.

"Trapped!" he groaned. A vase detached itself from the mantel and winged straight at Tubby's head. The little man ducked just in time, then rose and ran for the bed.

"Golly!" he panted. "I've been driven out of bed by those things before, but this is the first time I've ever been driven into one."

The sailing table now zoomed forward, and Hicks rose from the floor and joined his partner in the bed. "They're ganging up on us," he panted. "They want to kill us!"

Chairs began to scrape across the room menacingly, stiff-legged and strong-armed, and the girls retreated to the safety of the big bed.

Bill put his arms around Annabel protectingly as a pillow struck him in the head. The furniture continued its eery march. Suddenly the lamp flickered and went out, and in the darkness the legs of the chairs scraped in grumbling whispers, the drawers banged squeakily, and the blackness was filled with creaking laughter.

Bill turned and propelled Annabel towards the bed, diving under the sheets with the other four. It was cozy but crowded, and there was little time to consider the proprieties or even the improprieties of the situation.

For as if Bill's arrival were a signal, the entire bed began to rear up on its base, sliding the scrambled sextette to the bottom, where they lay in a confused heap.

"Ouch!" competed with "Eeeek!" and was overridden by "Hey!" and "Golly!" and "Help!" but the bed paid no heed. The head now rose, and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they tumbled back and forth.

"I'm getting seasick!" Tubby moaned. He rose and tried to race for the door in the darkness. Immediately, the bureau carommed across the room and barred his path. Then the chairs closed in. Inch by inch, Tubby was forced back into the bed.

Deep, mocking howls filled the blackness. "I've taken a lot of punishment in my time," observed the mattress, in a rather stuffy voice. "Yes sir. Bruised springs, broken cords." The bed-frame itself interrupted.

"That's nothing," it complained. "You ought to see my bolster. My poor, cracked bolster!"

"The blazes with you, and your bolster too—whatever that is!" Bill replied.

"We're talking about punishment," the bed resumed. "No more taking it. I'm going to give a little in return."

So saying, the bed lifted itself about a foot in the air and came down with a rousing thump. What it did to the sextette was definitely unnerving.

"Listen, sister," came Tubby's wail, from the bottom of the tangled, fleshy pile. "Just because we have no chairs, you don't have to use my face for a substitute."

"Oh, then those must be your teeth! I thought for a moment I was sitting on a mouse-trap."

Laboriously, the frightened party disentangled while the bed continued its soliloquy.

"What a life I've led," it whined, in self-pitying tones. "The things I've stood for!"

"We quite understand," Hicks said, hastily. "You needn't go on. How did you and the furniture come alive in the first place?" he asked, trying to change the subject.

"At the Magician's Convention last year," the bed explained. "One of the magicians—guess he was a friend of Dritch—happened to sleep in this room. He talked in his sleep, and while talking he repeated a magic spell of some kind that brought us to life."

"What became of him?" Hicks asked.

"He snored too much," said the bed, quite horridly. "So I smothered him under the mattress."

"Quit talking to the furniture," one of the blondes begged. "We want to get out of here!"

"Out, eh?" muttered the familiar voice from below. "Good idea. Hang on everybody—here we go!"

SUDDENLY the bed began to move. Before anyone in the party had realized their predicament the bed slid gracefully over to the door. Now the door obligingly opened, allowing the bed and its dazed occupants to proceed out into the hall corridor of the hotel. They rolled along towards the end of the hallway with startling speed.

"Stop it, somebody!" Annabel screamed, clinging to Bill's neck.

"Yes!" Tubby added frantically, "Can't somebody pull the throttle?"

"You're thinking of a runaway train," Hicks shouted above the clatter of rolling casters. "This is a runaway bed."

"Runaway?" Tubby wailed. "If anybody sees us it'll be a giveaway!"

"I'm getting off right here," said one of the blondes. But she could not. In some mysterious fashion the covers had managed to twine themselves around the various members of the party, who were now held in a tenacious grip.

"These damned things are holding us like the octuples of a tentapus," Hicks muttered.

"You mean the tentocts of a pulipus, don't you?" Annabel corrected, sweetly.

"Never mind the details!" Mr. Hicks shrieked. "Look where we're go-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing now!"

The mad bed had clattered down the hall as far as the staircase. Now, despite the loud protests of its inmates, it began to descend the stairs. Immediately the scrambled sextette slid again to the bottom of the bed where they lay groaning at every bump.

"Oh!" sighed Bill, whose long silence had been due to a pillow that was wedged in his mouth. "If I ever get out of this, I'll be an invalid for life."

"A bed-ridden one," added Tubby. "From now on, I sleep in a hammock, if at all."

"Or a nice cool grave," Hicks babbled. "Oh Lord—here we go again!"

And so they did. Ten flights of stairs were clatteringly covered. Fortunately, nobody else in the hotel seemed aware of the noise; the hour was late and the convention guests probably believed the sounds were caused by their own members coming home. So the ten flights of stairs were painfully descended by the bed and its reluctant passengers, and at last the strange vehicle bounced right out into the lobby.

It was two A. M., but the sound of the tumult served to awaken the ever-watchful house detective from his slumbers.

He ambled over as Bill nudged his companions. "Know him?" he whispered.

Hicks shook his head. So did Tubby. Even Annabel tossed her curls. "A new one," she explained. "Hired yesterday, I think. The old house dick quit when he heard the Magician's Convention was coming."

"Then let's get out of here," Bill implored. "Bed, do your stuff! Keep right on moving!"

But the bed, for reasons of its own, stopped right smack in the center of the lobby as the Law approached.

CONSEQUENTLY, all that gentleman witnessed was a lone bed occupying the deserted lobby. Its six occupants immediately pretended slumber. Annabel cradled her face in her hands, Tubby snored, and Hicks hid under the blankets. But the detective was not convinced. He strode up to the bed and poked Hicks in the side.

"What have we here?" he demanded.

"Huh?" Hicks assumed drowsiness. "What do you mean, waking a man out of a good sound sleep?"

"Get up, you," barked the house dick, slapping Hicks sharply on the bottom of his feet.

"Here, now," Hicks objected. "Why not let sleeping dogs lie?"

"You picked a fine place for it, brother," the detective snarled. "Right here in the middle of the lobby."

"A fine place for what?" inquired the smaller of the two blondes.

"Never mind, lady. All I want to know is, why did you decide on the lobby?"

"Just trying to advertise the hotel," Tubby offered, weakly.

"I suppose these ladies constitute a portion of your advertising matter?" the detective wanted to know. "One thing I'd like to find out before I run you all in. Just how did you get the bed all the way down those stairs?"

"This I can't answer," Tubby answered. "But I'd like to give it a good kick in the slats."

"We're not responsible," the larger blonde added. "We just rode down."

"Well, all out—this is the end of the line." The detective gestured at them with his cigar. "Rise and shine."

"We can't," said Annabel, in a small voice.

"You mean you won't?" asked the house dick, menacingly.

"No, we can't. We're—we're not dressed for the lobby." She attempted a blush.

"Get up anyway."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No," Tubby broke in. "I have my alarm set for seven. I need my rest."

"Out!" the detective insisted.

"We paid for this bed and we're staying in it," Hicks replied. "How do you like that?"

"How do you like this?" countered the detective, drawing a nasty-looking black revolver. "I'll give you just ten seconds."

"But we're not dressed, either," Bill protested, stoutly defending Annabel's story.

"You mean to tell me all six of you are—?" The man could go no further. "All in one bed, too!"

"We're Scotch, mister," Annabel explained.

"Listen," said the detective, despairingly. "Any more of this talk will drive me screwy. I want you all to wrap some blankets around you and come into the office. There's an awful lot of funny business going on around here."

"But we can't come," Bill said, deciding to tell the truth. "The bed won't let us go."

The detective groaned and Bill subsided.

"You see, sir," Tubby went on. "It seems like we made our bed and now we have to lie in it."

"I'll call the manager!" yelled the detective.

"But—" Bill blurted out, "*I* am the manager!"

THAT WAS too much for the house dick. Gibbering insanely, he discharged his gun at the bedsheets, which immediately burst into flame. The bed, angered at this sudden attack, began to roll after the detective. With a scream of horror, the poor man fled before the ill-tempered bed's charge, as the flaming sheets parted to release the six bed-partners.

Bill, completely unnerved, headed for the elevators. The last thing he saw was a backward vision of the bed knocking down the detective and jumping frantically around on his prostrate form.

Reaching the open, empty elevator, Bill slammed the door shut and glided upwards. He meant to stop at the second floor, but through the glass he saw that the halls were now crowded by pajama-clad people, all aroused by the revolver shots and the general bedlam over the bed that took it on the lam.

Bill didn't care to face people for a long, long time to come. For this reason he sped the dark elevator up to the twelfth and topmost floor. Here was a stairway corridor that led up to the roof garden. Bill opened the elevator door and stepped out.

"Now for a little air," he whispered.

"Just what I needed," said a musical voice from behind him. Bill whirled suddenly, half-expecting to see the elevator stool rising to beat his head in.

Instead he encountered Annabel.

"How did you get here?" he demanded.

"I was here all the time," said the girl, demurely. "But you didn't even bother to look around. If you had, we might have taken more time to get up here."

"What?"

"Not very bright tonight, are we?" the girl jeered. "Very well, let's stroll around the roof."

Bill agreed. It was the worst thing he possibly could have done under the circumstances. These circumstances included the deserted roof-garden, the wicker sofa, the night breeze, and the moon.

The garden looked down on the elfin lights of a great city—a city of enchantment when viewed from this height. The wicker sofa invited watchers to sit down, whereupon the night breeze, cooling their cheeks, caused them to gaze upwards. And then, of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

course, they could not help but notice the moon.

It floated serenely in the sky, a white witch among ghostly clouds. Moonbeams tangled in Annabel's hair, melted into Annabel's eyes.

Bill gazed at her silently, and she gave him back a mocking smile. Any other man, under similar circumstances, would have embraced his opportunity—that is to say, Annabel. But Bill's innocent reaction made her feel strangely tender. This, the girl did her hardboiled best to disguise.

"You great big chivalrous square!" She moved closer to him and Bill moved away. "What's the matter—am I really so repulsive?"

"Of course not," Bill confessed. "I can't trust myself when I get near you."

"You sound like the second act of a lousy play," she told him. And moved still closer.

"I wonder what's become of the boys," Bill quavered. "Perhaps we'd better go downstairs."

"We will," Annabel promised, a gleam in her violet eyes. "We will, eventually."

And, eventually, they did...

WHEN Bill Dawson awoke in his own room some hours later he was not, strictly speaking, a new man. But he was not an old man, either.

Whatever had happened to him in his peculiar nightmare, it had all been for the best, he decided, as he dressed and faced the morning. He felt refreshed, alert, confident, ready to face New York and his vacation with renewed zest. The vividness of his weird dream seemed to add to his well-being this morning.

Actually, as he remembered it, the mental images of Mr. Marmaduke Hicks and Tubby were more vivid than those of the people he had known back at the furniture factory. He could recall the details of their dress with greater clarity, the intonations of their voices, the peculiarities of their expressions. He fancied he could almost smell their breath.

Bill remembered, too, that he had been quite drunk in this nightmare, and happily so. He had behaved in an uncouth, uncivilized way, and found it all surprisingly attractive. He recalled the exuberant antics of his dream companions. And he remembered Annabel.

Annabel! A vision of her white slimness, honeyed hair and violent violet eyes crossed his mind. A dangerous girl, but a delectable one. What a dream *that* had been, he mused. But now, to face reality—

Bill was just ready to go down for breakfast when the phone rang. He picked it up. A male voice came across the wire.

"Hello, is this the manager?"

"No. This is Mr. Dawson's room."

"That's who I'm looking for. Mr. Dawson, the new manager."

"New—manager?"

"Yeah. Aren't you the gent what won the hotel last night in a crap game?"

Bill almost dropped the phone.

Then it *wasn't* a dream. It was *real!*

That meant Annabel was real. And Hicks, and Tubby—

The door opened. Hicks and Tubby marched in.

Bill's grasp on the phone wavered. "What do you want?" he murmured.

"This is Janus," said the voice on the phone. "I'm the doorman. And if you're the new manager, I figure you'd wanna know that—"

"Yes, I'm the new manager, I guess," Bill admitted, more to himself than to the doorman. "What was it you wanted me to know?"

"Only that somebody just brought a wolf into the hotel."

"A wolf?"

"Yeah. One of them magicians, I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guess. So what do I do?"

"I'll be right down," Bill promised.

He hung up hastily and turned to face Marmaduke Hicks and Tubby Telbertson. Both the tall and the short gentlemen were attired in spotless morning clothes; black tailcoats and grey, striped trousers.

"How do we look?" Tubby piped. "Thought we'd better get into these outfits and pretend to be assistant managers or something."

"Wonderful," Bill agreed. "But I thought you two were broke. Where'd you get the wardrobe?"

"There was a mortician's convention here last month," Hicks explained. "Things were pretty dead, but we managed to get hold of these undertaker's suits."

"Well, change into some zookeeper's costume," Bill sighed. "We've got a wolf in the lobby."

"I told you these magicians played rough," Tubby said, not at all perturbed. "Let's go see about this."

"Annabel's downstairs," Hicks added, as they moved to the door. "Just drank breakfast with her. She told us you hit the roof last night."

"What happened to you?" Bill changed the subject, hastily.

"Oh, we were around. Which reminds me, we have a date to meet Mrs. Pratt and Susan Foster at the Convention Meeting this noon."

"Who are they?" Bill asked, as they entered the elevator.

"Our little playmates of last night. The blondes," Hicks explained. "Mrs. Pratt's ex-husband is President of International Legerdemainiacs. That's the official name of the Convention, you know. She doesn't like him, but she came here hoping some other magician might give her a job. She used to be Pratt's assistant in the magic act—he worked under the name of Houdonit, you know—and she claims he did a lot of prestidigitation with her."

"You seem to have found out a lot," Bill observed.

"Oh, we did," Tubby assured him. "Susan Foster wants to get in a magic act, too. She used to be in burlesque, and she has a wonderful idea for a strip-tease. After she removes her clothing, she vanishes completely."

THE PARTY emerged from the elevator on the lobby floor. The first person Bill saw was Annabel. She flew into his arms, and if Bill had any doubts as to her reality, they were quickly and firmly dispelled. Bill lost himself in a long kiss, but he was called into awareness by a terrible thing.

The thing was a sound. A howling.

"The wolf!" Tubby exclaimed. Nor was he alone. An excited knot of guests clustered along the lobby wall, out of harm's way. Over at the registration desk stood two men—and the wolf.

Bill stared at the great shaggy beast, then turned his attention to its companions. They were equally strange and equally dismaying. One of them was tall and gaunt, a cadaverous figure muffled in a long black cloak. The other was a walking beard.

Never in his life had Bill seen such a beard. It was shaggier than the wolf; a huge white Fuller Brush of a beard that swept the floor. Somewhere behind the beard a face must have been concealed, because a red nose protruded through it about four feet from the floor. Bill judged the beard's wearer must be a small man. How he was attired could not be told. He might have gone nude if he chose—for no one could appear naked with that beard.

Wolf, cloak and beard were now confronting the desk clerk, and an argument seemed to be in progress.

"I'm sorry," the desk clerk was

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They were a strange, unearthly pair, accompanied by a great shaggy beast...

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saying. "I can't register a wolf."

"You don't need to register him," came a voice from behind the beard. "This is not a dog-show."

"We do not permit animals, sir. Everyone who stays here must be registered."

"But it's for the Convention," the beard argued. "I've told you a hundred times."

"Wolves do not belong at Conventions," was the answer. "I am sure the rest of the magicians would not approve. Think of the publicity—the press will be here, and we'll even have a broadcast over the radio tonight. We can't afford to have a wolf in the hotel—suppose he howled when we went on the air? Wolves and radio don't mix."

"On the contrary," persisted the beard, "This wolf may come in handy on the radio. We could use his paws for station identification."

"Sorry, but I cannot give a room to the wolf," the desk clerk snapped.

"Let me speak to the manager!" It was the cloak who spoke now.

"Here I go," Bill muttered, removing Annabel's arms from his shoulders.

"No, Bill—keep away!" warned the girl. "That wolf looks dangerous. Remember what my uncle said about this Convention. Lots of queer things happen. Be careful!"

"I'm the manager," he said. "I've got to take care of these problems or the hotel will get a bad name."

He strode resolutely towards the desk.

"Manager!" yelled the cloaked man. "We want the manager!"

"That's me," Bill announced. Cloak, beard and wolf turned and stared at him. The wolf made a low noise in its throat and opened a big red mouth.

Bill quickly dodged to one side and entered the desk clerk's cage. "What's the trouble?" he asked.

"These gentlemen have just registered here, and they insist we give a room to the wolf," the clerk explained. "It's the Convention, of course."

"I see." Bill glanced at the ledger and noted the names of the cloak and beard.

"You are Pseudo W. Nym?"

The cloak bowed, and the long white face creased into a smile. "That's my stage name, of course," explained the cloak. "My real name is Onymous. N. Onymous, to be exact."

"Greek?"

"From Transylvania. Triladelphia, Transylvania."

Bill noted the second name on the ledger—the beard's—and his heart sank.

"Mr. L. Dritch?"

"That is correct." The beard bowed.

"Dritch. Weren't you here last year?"

"That is correct," said the beard. "I made a preliminary investigation of the premises. My findings were satisfactory, so this year—as you can see—I have returned with my friends."

"Very decent of you, I'm sure," Bill quavered, eyeing the gigantic wolf.

"More of them will be arriving this evening," Mr. L. Dritch purred, through the beard. "Some of my friends do not—er—care to be seen in daylight."

"This I can understand."

"What's that?"

"I mean—it will be nice to have them here. Are they all magicians?"

"Definitely, my dear sir. Thaumaturgists, necromancers, adepts, cabalists, goetists and evocators. To say nothing of mages and wizards and other practitioners of the mantic arts. This will be, unless I greatly err, a real Convention." A chuckle filtered through the beard—a chuckle filled with malice and dandruff.

"We'll try to make you feel at home," Bill promised, wondering

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whether it would be best to keep the mysterious Mr. Dritch happy until he thought of a way to get rid of him. "Anything you want, just ask me."

"I will do so," Mr. Dritch nodded. "Perhaps you could begin by finding me some raw meat."

"Raw meat?"

"For the wolf, here. He's hungry."

"Never mind that," the cloaked Mr. Nym interrupted. "Are there any children around?"

Bill turned pale.

"He's very fond of children," Dritch explained.

"Raw children, that is," added the cloak.

BILL DECIDED that pleasing these peculiar guests was out of the question.

"Now see here," he said. "One thing you simply must understand. We can't have a wolf staying at this hotel."

The beard shrugged, and Mr. Dritch shrugged with it. "But that is just what I've been trying to tell this stupid room clerk," he said. "This isn't an ordinary wolf."

"He's not?" Bill glanced down at the great slavering beast as it sniffed hungrily at his leg.

"Certainly not. He's really a werewolf!"

"A were—but that's impossible, there are no such things!" Bill turned and appealed to the group loitering fearfully in the lobby. "You heard what he said, folks. Tell him there are no such things as werewolves."

The group was silent, but every eye stared glassily at the shaggy creature at Bill's side.

"You see," Bill laughed, weakly. "Nobody believes in a silly superstition like werewolves any more."

The wolf opened red jaws.

"All right," said the wolf. "Have it your own way, then, smarty. So I'm not a werewolf. *Boo!*"

"Good heavens!" Bill peered at the lobby spectators. "Did you hear what I heard?"

Apparently they had, because there wasn't anybody in the lobby any more.

"Now do we get that room?" purred Mr. L. Dritch, dusting the carpet with his long white beard.

"Give them the room," Bill sighed. "Give them anything they want, just so they get that—monster—out of sight."

"Fine," said the cloak. "I want to go up to my room right away and change for the Convention meeting. It must be started in the ballroom by now."

"I want to change, too," remarked the werewolf.

"Not in the lobby," Mr. Dritch warned.

The desk clerk extended a pen with a trembling hand. The wolf grasped it between its teeth and laboriously scratched a signature in the register.

"Mr. W. Wolf" it wrote.

Sighing, the room clerk extended keys to the trio and they marched away. Nobody offered to carry their baggage, and Bill, feeling that the hotel must extend some courtesy even to such unusual guests, tagged along to the elevator.

"What about your luggage?" he inquired.

The man in the cloak turned and smiled. "Never mind," he said. "Two men will bring it up later."

"Two men?"

"Well, you can't expect one man to carry such a load alone," the cloak explained. "Ordinarily it takes six, three to a side. Plus the honorary pallbearers, that is."

Bill didn't care to ask any more questions. He went for the corridor, to find his new assistants and Annabel. The last he saw of Mr. Dritch, Mr. Nym and Mr. W. Wolf was when they entered the elevator. The

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hairy trio looked as if they belonged at a Barber's Convention, and Bill heartily wished that's where they'd gone.

"Looks like trouble ahead," he sighed.

"Right," said Mr. Hicks, grabbing him at the hall door and yanking him through. "Come on into the ballroom. The Convention's just started, and all hell is busting loose!"

THE SEVENTH Annual Convention of the International Legerdemainiacs at the Hotel Flopmoor, New York, opened promptly in the Grand Ballroom at 10 A. M. the morning of October 30th.

The magicians, some two hundred in all, including professional stage and nightclub performers and a large group of skilled amateurs and hobbyists, were welcomed to the two-day session by Oswald Pratt, better known to the public as "Houdunit".

He promised them a business meeting in the afternoon and an election of officers that night; a free tour of the city next morning, and a Grand Hallowe'en Ball for the following evening to wind up the Convention.

But this morning's session, said Mr. Pratt, was to be devoted to introducing a number of prominent and internationally famous practitioners of illusion and deception, who would speak on new tricks and variations of old ones.

"The first distinguished guest I wish to present," said Mr. Pratt, peering down from the stage at the audience of bearded, goateed and mustached stage magicians who sat stiffly in the evening clothes and turbans usually associated with their deceptive calling, "is that celebrated mentalist, star of stage, screen, radio and television—none other than the famous Dumbinger—who has arranged to give us a demonstration of his mind-reading powers and his remarkable feats of memory. As you all know," Mr. Pratt informed his hearers, "Dumbinger is the man who never misses, the man whose mental concentration is the marvel of the world today. It is a pleasure and a privilege to present the one and only Dumbinger—in person!"

There was loud applause. A spotlight flashed on the stage, Mr. Pratt bowed and gestured, and—

Nothing happened.

Nobody appeared. Mr. Pratt peered up at the platform as the crowd stamped and whistled. He walked back on the stage. "Mr. Dumbinger!" he called.

A pimply-faced bellboy suddenly raced down the aisle and whispered up at the stage. Mr. Pratt nodded and faced the audience. He held up his hands for silence.

"I'm sorry," he said. "There has been an error. It seems Mr. Dumbinger forgot his appointment this morning. As a matter of fact, he has registered at the wrong hotel. He just phoned and said he will be down later as soon as he can find his trousers, which he seems to have mislaid."

Jeers and hoots from the magicians. Mr. Pratt, a large, red-faced man, became if anything larger and more red-faced. "In his absence," he said, "I will carry on myself. Since this morning session is devoted to illusions, I'll show you how I perform one of my own. It's a variation of that famous old standby—sawing a woman in half."

Pratt stared into the darkness of the hall. "I have my own equipment here," he said, "But I need a volunteer. I'm wondering if my former wife happens to be present. She is familiar with the trick and may be kind enough to assist me."

"Here I am, Oswald," called the tall blonde who had entered Tubby's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

life the night before. "I'll be right up."

She took the stage, and there was more whistling as she bowed to the onlookers. Pratt rushed to the wings and presently returned, wheeling a huge table and a circular saw attached to an electrical turbine.

"I thought you'd be here, Mabel," he whispered to his ex-wife. "And I hope you're behaving yourself. Remember our agreement—if I ever catch you with another man, I cut off your alimony."

"You can saw me in half," retorted the blonde, "But if you cut off my alimony you'll be sorry."

BOTH NOW presented smiling faces to the audience, and the stunt began. Mrs. Pratt lay down on the table. Pratt went into his patter routine. He placed a box over the blonde's body and then set his electric saw above her midriff. He turned on the current. Spotlights flashed on the gleaming circle of steel as the motor hummed and the saw rasped. It bit into the board, cut through the wood, sliced through the blonde's body, sliced through the table beneath. There was a hiss and a roar.

Pratt moved the two halves of the table apart, showing Mrs. Pratt's head and bust separated from her legs and torso. There was loud applause.

Presently he covered the two halves with a cloth, waved a small wand, and caused a cloud of smoke to cover the entire table. When the cloud wafted away he lifted the cloth and Mrs. Pratt jumped down from the table, smiling and exhibiting a whole body once again.

There was louder and prolonged applause.

And at this moment a voice in the audience cried, "Fake!"

"Fake?" gasped Mr. Pratt.

"Fake!" yelled the voice. "A great big fake!"

At this juncture, Hicks had noticed the uproar and dragged Bill down the hall towards the ballroom. As he entered it with Annabel and Tubby tagging along, the cries of "Fake!" grew louder and more furious. The entire meeting was in a tumult.

"Who calls me a fake?" Pratt demanded, staring into the darkness and trying to locate the voice.

"I do!"

"And who, pray tell, are you?"

"Archie!" yelled the voice. "Archie the Archfiend!"

"Never heard of you," Pratt snapped. "Who books you?"

"Nobody. I'm on my own."

"Where'd you appear last?"

"I never perform in public," Archie yelled back. "People don't appreciate my type of magic."

Mr. Pratt forced a laugh. "You see, gentlemen?" he asked the crowd. "Here is a rank amateur, who has never even appeared on the stage, challenging my illusion. I suppose you object to my timing?"

"I object to the whole thing," Archie called up. "It's all a fake. That big saw and that box and black cloth—all a lot of hooey, that's what it is. You can't saw a woman in half and make it look real."

"Perhaps you can do better?" challenged Mr. Pratt, in a fine red rage that went nicely with his white gardenia.

"Sure I can. Matter of fact, I will."

The small figure came down the aisle and clambered up to the stage. Bill and his companions saw a little portly man with a snub nose who looked more like a burlesque comic than a magician. He peered tauntingly up at the huge Mr. Pratt.

"Well, here I am," he said. "Ready to go. Of course, I didn't bring a girl with me, you know."

"Excuses," snorted Pratt. "I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thought so! Cheap excuses! Well, you won't get out of this so easily. We can get you an assistant from the crowd, can't we?"

"You mean some girl would be willing for me to saw her?" asked Archie, incredulously.

"Why not? How about my ex-wife, here?"

But Mrs. Pratt shook her head. "Sorry. Once is enough. Besides, I'm afraid of this character. He looks like a schizophrenic to me."

"Like a what?" demanded Archie, red hair bristling.

"Schizophrenic," repeated Mrs. Pratt. "You know—split personality."

"Lay on the table and I'll split your personality for you," Archie offered. But the tall blonde moved away. "You see?" said Archie. "I can't do it without a volunteer."

"I'll take a chance." A feminine voice rose from the darkness of the hall.

A MOMENT later the girl appeared—a slim, blackhaired young woman clad in slacks. "I ain't a professional," she explained, "but I've always wanted a chance to go on the stage on account of my friends all say I'm lousy with talent." She snapped her gum roguishly at Mr. Pratt.

"Will she do?" Pratt demanded of Archie.

"Why not? No great loss." Archie rubbed his hands. "Now for the equipment."

"Want to use my table and box and saw?"

"No. Who needs all that crud?" Archie shrugged. "That's just what I mean about fakes. I want to show you all how to really do a saw routine. All I need is a chair and a saw. A regular hand saw."

"Hand saw?"

A bellhop was fetched and dispatched to bring back a saw from the basement. Archie strutted before the crowd.

"You never saw an act like this before," he told them. "This will give you a real thrill. I learned my magic the hard way—no props for me, no siree! Here, stretch out, honey, and relax while I cut up."

The girl bent back over a low chair, resting her trunk against the seat.

"This is awfully nice of you to help," Archie crooned at her. "You sure you don't mind?"

"Not if it helps me professionally," the girl assured him. "It—it won't hurt, will it?"

"Of course not. I told you I'm a real magician. So I'll make sure you don't feel a thing."

The bellboy returned with a handsaw—a gleaming, wicked little thing. Archie hefted it. "Used to play one like this back on the farm," he mused. "That was before I got on the Arthur Godfrey Amateur Show."

"Never mind the autobiography," snarled Pratt. "You made some dirty remarks about my trick. You promised to show us how you saw a woman in half. Now get going, and let the chips fall where they may."

"Hips," corrected Archie the Archfiend, sweetly. "All right, here we go."

He picked up the saw and poised over the young lady's midriff.

"Hey, wait!" Pratt exclaimed. "No cloth? No patter to the audience? No misdirection or sleight of hand?"

"Naw!" Archie grunted. "That's the beauty part of my trick. I just saw her, see? See-saw. Right out in front of everybody. Like—this."

And he took the saw and began to saw the girl in half.

There was no noise, no smoke, no black cloths fluttering, no music, no drama. Just a stout little man sawing

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He raised the saw in a gesture of triumph and stepped back. The table—and the girl—had parted in the middle, the pieces falling to the floor

a shapely brunette across the middle with a plain carpenter's handsaw. The saw sliced into her, the little man worked away, and pretty soon the saw came out the other side.

"Hey!" yelled the girl. "I'm chilly!"

"Fresh air blowing on yer stomach," Archie explained. "You're open at the middle now, see? In two pieces."

"But it didn't hurt—it's a trick," the girl persisted.

"Sure, that's the trick, doing it so it doesn't hurt, and so you're still alive. But you're in two pieces, all right."

The audience rose.

It was true. The girl was in two pieces, all right or all wrong. One piece consisted of head, bust and arms. The other piece was legs and torso.

"There you are," called Archie the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Archfiend. "That's what I call really sawing a woman in half."

"Good Lord!" yelled Pratt. "He—he did it! I can see she's been bifurcated."

"Watch yer language, buddy," cautioned Archie.

"You—you mean I'm really cut in two?" wailed the brunette. "Actually?"

"Actually."

"But I didn't know—and how will this help me professionally—ooh, it's true!" gasped the girl, looking down and seeing her legs wiggling on the floor as her torso moved independently of her own volition.

SCREAMS rose from the audience. Annabel grasped Bill's arm tightly. "See what I mean about magicians?" she whispered.

"Do something!" yelled Mr. Pratt at Archie, who stood smiling and pointing at the divided girl.

"What more do you want?" asked Archie. "I told you what I'd do and I did it."

"Put me back together, quick!" gasped the girl.

"Yes—hurry up and put her back together!" Pratt moaned.

"Sorry. That's not part of the trick," Archie smiled. "I never said I would put her together again. Matter of fact, I don't know how to. Never got any instructions, and like I say, this is the first time I really tried to saw a woman in half."

"But I can't stay like this," the girl screeched.

"Why not? You're alive, and nothing hurts you, does it? Why beef?"

"Oooh!" The girl tried to sit up but failed, since she no longer had anything to sit up with, let alone on. "Why, you sawed-off little squirt—"

"Look who's calling me sawed-off!" chuckled Archie.

"Stop him!" yelled Pratt, as the little man walked away.

"Yes—stop him!" the girl echoed.

The audience still wasn't quite sure if the whole thing was a gag or not. Now they learned the ghastly truth. For as Archie walked away, the girl followed him.

To be exact, the legs followed him. The legs and torso got up from the chair and began to chase him through the hall.

The sight of the trunkless torso moving through the darkness was a little too much for the magicians at large. They began to run, too. So did Bill and Annabel and Hicks and Tubby.

As for Mr. Pratt, he stood on the stage and stared at the head and arms of the sawed-up girl.

"I can't make heads nor tails out of all this," Pratt sighed.

"Do something!" she yelled.

"Yeah," Pratt muttered, to himself. "I guess I'd better." Picking up the gavel, he banged lustily and yelled, "Meeting is adjourned."

But nobody heard him. The darkened hall was completely empty. Pratt's last glimpse of the audience consisted of a vision of Archie the Archfiend, struggling to worm his way through the crowd at the rear exit, while the animated torso of a woman kicked him in the pants.

"NOW WHAT do we do?" Bill groaned, as Annabel dragged him along the corridor.

"Relax," the girl advised, panting and lashing out at the crowd. "Be like me," she told him punching one of the fleeing magicians in the ribs, "Keep calm and cool."

"Yes," Hicks shouted, above the din, as he ripped the coat of the man ahead of him, "Don't get excited!"

Tubby, who was running interference, grunted in assent as they moved out into the lobby.

"But this will ruin the hotel's repu-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tation," Bill objected. "We'll lose all our business."

"Take it easy. In a couple of hours everybody will have forgotten about the whole thing. The story will be twisted around until everyone thinks it was all a gag. These magicians are a wild bunch anyway. Look—they're not checking out. They're just heading for the bar to drown their memories."

The girl spoke truly. Bill could see the guests crowding into the cocktail lounge.

"We'll have to make plans, though," he warned. "Remember those awful creatures who checked in this morning with Mr. Dritch? Wait until they get loose—"

"We'll think about that problem later," Hicks promised. "When we're equipped to handle it."

"He means when we're drunk," Tubby supplied, unhelpfully. They halted before the elevators and Bill peered around, trying to locate Archie the Archfiend and his pursuer. But the little redheaded sorcerer and his unusual better half were nowhere to be seen.

"Time to go," Hicks remarked, glancing at his watch. "We have a date for lunch with Mrs. Pratt and Susan Foster, remember? Are you two joining us?"

"Not at the moment," Bill sighed. "I couldn't stand the thought of eating lunch while the bottom half of a woman is running loose in this hotel."

"That sounds a little odd, but I guess I get what you mean," Annabel conceded. "You and I will stay here, then. See you boys later."

She waved farewell to Hicks and Tubby as the twosome took their leave, and the elevator went up.

"Come on," Bill said, grabbing Annabel's arm. "I've got work to do."

"What sort of work?"

"Well, I'm the manager. I'd better find out what this is all about." He led Annabel to the offices behind the registration desk. There he introduced himself to the hotel steward, the comptroller, the assistant manager, a Mr. Al Gonquin, and several other dignitaries who had all been informed of Bill's new job by Manager Bipple before he left.

Bill said as little as possible. He asked polite questions about how things were going, indicated his approval of arrangements for the day, and rejoiced in the knowledge that news of the terrible scene in the ballroom had not yet come to their attention.

"Why, running a hotel seems to be easy," Bill confided to the girl as they left. "All you need is a lot of guests and some beds."

"A great theory," Annabel agreed. "I'm all for it, myself. Shall we go upstairs and relax a bit?"

"Not yet." Bill was grimly determined. "I've got to solve this business about the sawed-up woman. Go to the desk and ask Al Gonquin to call a meeting over in the service room. I want to speak to all the bellboys, and also to the house detective."

TEN MINUTES later a dozen bellboys and the house detective faced Manager Bill Dawson in the small room off the lobby. The house dick was properly apologetic for events of the previous evening.

"I didn't know you was the manager," he explained, "or else I wouldn't have paid no attention how many people you had in bed with you." The bellboys exchanged wondering smirks at this.

"Thank you," said Bill, with a pained smile. "Let's consider the incident closed. I trust it will not happen again."

"Oh that's all right," the house dick beamed. "You can do it again tonight if you like. Round up a whole bunch

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and climb into bed right in the lobby if you like, it's OK with—"

"Kindly shut your fat mouth," Bill snapped. "Now, men, let's get down to business. I have called this meeting for a very serious reason. The good name and reputation of the Flopmoor is at stake. No guest should be informed of what I have to say here, and it will be your duty to conceal the facts wherever possible."

"You can trust us, boss," said the head bellhop.

"Good. Briefly, I want to warn you all about a certain woman, or rather, a certain portion of a certain woman. Her bottom half is running around loose."

"What?"

"I mean—oh, how can I explain it? I want you all to conceal the bottom half of this woman. Don't let it get out whatever you do."

"Please, sir," said one of the bellboys. "I don't quite understand. Do you want us to find this loose woman for you and bring her here?"

"No. Just the bottom half is what interests me—I mean, it's chasing after the guests and I want it to stop."

"What's its name?" asked the house detective. "I don't recall us registering half a woman before."

"We didn't," Bill gulped, desperately. "She was all right when she came in. It's just that somebody cut her in two in the ballroom recently—"

"Then it's murder!" shouted the detective. "I'll call police—homicide—we'll tail the guy that cut her—"

"He's already being tailed," Bill explained. "By her lower limbs. Can't you understand? This bottom half isn't dead, it's very much alive, and—oh, Annabel, help me!"

Annabel patted the stricken man on the shoulder and took over. In a few words she explained the unusual situation to the bellhops and the detective. They promised faithfully to keep on the lookout for the animated torso and try to bring it back to the upper portion of the woman in the ballroom. "Don't let that half get away, either," Annabel warned. "You'd better split up; some of you look for one section, some for the other."

Then Annabel led Bill away, as the bellhops tossed coins, heads or tails, to determine which half they would look for.

"You need a drink after all this," she suggested. "And some rest. Let's go up to your room and take things easy for a while."

"All right," Bill agreed. "But we can't stop work now. I want to be prepared for those magicians—no telling what Mr. Dritch will be up to. If he animated furniture last year, Lord knows what to expect now."

The lobby was quiet once more. Bill stopped at the desk to order sandwiches and a bottle of rye sent up to his room, and then escorted Annabel to the elevator.

"Wonder what Hicks and Tubby are doing?" she mused, as they ascended. She was not long in finding out.

The elevator came to rest on the second floor and two men entered, casting nervous glances over their shoulders. Both of them wore violent bathrobes and still more violent frowns. The elder of the two, disregarding Bill and Annabel completely, grumbled to his companion in low tones.

"There I lay," he muttered, "when all of a sudden the door opens and these two women come running in like all hell was at their heels. Into the washroom they go and turn on the showers, just like that."

"You don't say!" commented his companion.

"I do say. So I yelled through the door and asked them what they thought they were doing. 'We're tak-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing a bath' one of them yells back. So I asked 'Why?' and she says 'Because we're drunk, that's why, and we want to sober up fast so we can drink some more. And don't come in, because the tub is crowded and besides, we're only half-dressed.' Then they started to laugh and I got out of there."

"Lucky I came along in the hall," remarked the second man. "What are you going to do about it all?"

"I'm going to find the manager and complain about those half-dressed women."

"That's going to sound funny complaining about half-dressed women, I mean," mused the second man.

"Well, I'll make the manager find them and throw them out, whoever they are."

"How will you recognize them if they're only half-dressed?" his friend pondered. "I mean, they all sort of look alike that way, don't they?"

"Don't tell me there's any more of them in this hotel," said the first man, hastily. "I came here for a rest. And there's darn little rest with those half-dressed women around."

"Or any half-dressed women," his companion added thoughtfully.

BILL SHRANK back in the corner and hid his face. The elevator paused on the fourth floor and allowed another passenger to enter—a scantily-clad man who was attired quite simply in a small bath towel. He looked bewildered and apologetic as he addressed the occupants of the car.

"Have you noticed any half-dressed women running around?" he inquired.

"Do you want a half-dressed woman?" asked Annabel, curiously.

"Gawd no, lady—I've had my fill of them!" groaned the small man.

"Frank, aren't you?" Annabel replied. "You and your half-dressed women."

"Quit saying that word, lady," begged the man. "Half-dressed women have ruined my day. And that's not the worst."

The elevator-boy was so engrossed in this story that he failed to start the car. The little man in the bath towel buttonholed him and continued his tale of woe. "I came into my room a little while ago and there they were, two women lying right on my bed, fast asleep."

"They're pretty fast awake, too," Annabel offered. But the little man ignored her. "So I went over to wake them up and all of a sudden I stumbled on something lying on the floor. I was standing on a man's stomach."

"Go on," said Bill, softly, although he was beginning to realize who the man was talking about.

"By this time I was a little confused, I guess. Because I kicked this man quite hard in the face. He slid under the bed, but believe it or not, as soon as he disappeared another man stuck his head out from down there and began to curse me. By this time the women woke up and the other man crawled out and all four of them began chasing me around the room, drunk as coots.

"I tried to talk to the tall man, the one who wore glasses—and he said they were unfrocked members of the Ku Klux Klan and if I would undress they would make me Supreme Kleagle. Then I could join them in the big hunt.

"So I asked what they were hunting for, only half-dressed like that, and what do you think they told me?"

"What?" asked Annabel.

"They said they were looking for half a woman. Half a woman, mind you—and just the bottom half at that. Said she, or it, was running loose somewhere in the hotel and they had to find her. Told me to be on the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lookout for a pair of green slacks with nothing up above.

"And all the time they were telling me this, they kept pulling off my clothes—said they were going to use me for a decoy for this half-whatzis.

"So I told them they were crazy, and drunk, and to get out of my room. I even went over to the door and opened it. And then—"

The little man gulped and shuddered. He nearly dropped the bath-towel in his agitation.

"So help me, when I opened the door, in marched half a woman! A pair of green slacks and nothing else. Just a torso—but even more so, if you know what I mean!

"They all jumped on her, or it, and it tried to kick, but they wrapped it up in a sheet, and I saw my chance and ran for the elevator. And here I am."

"And here we are," said Annabel, as the elevator stopped on their floor. She turned to the elevator operator. "Boy, take these gentlemen downstairs and see that valet service provides them with fresh wardrobes. Then send them all into the bar for some refreshment. On the house, of course, compliments of the management. We'll see that the rooms are cleaned up for them again."

"Thanks, lady," said the little man. "Are you the manager?"

"He is," Annabel indicated Bill. "And those drunks are just relatives. You know how it is with relatives—got to put up with them, can't kick them out. I trust you'll pardon the whole affair."

"All right with me," agreed the big man in the bathrobe. "I'd pardon anything for a drink right now." He peered at Bill. "So they're your relatives, eh?" he mused. "Well, if I may ask just one question—what relation are you to that half of a woman?"

"Oh, she's my half-sister," Bill replied.

"Of course, now I get it," the man said, as they exited. A slow look of doubt crept over his face. "But wait—" he cried.

Bill and Annabel didn't wait. They hastened to his room.

"I hope they sent up that bottle," he sighed. "I need a drink right now more than those men. What a panic this turned out to be—and imagine, me, wanting a drink!"

"Do you good, Annabel said.

IT DID. The bottle and sandwiches waited, but not for long. Bill and the girl sat down and ate. And drank. And drank some more. It was getting on towards afternoon, and Bill felt the need of relaxation. Once more life had resumed its unreal quality; things were happening much too fast, and there seemed to be no solution save an alcoholic one. One drink led to another.

Annabel sat down on the edge of Bill's chair and stroked his hair as he poured into the glasses.

"It may be a little strange to you, all this excitement, but I hope you're having fun," she murmured.

"Yes, I am, heaven help me!" Bill sighed. He *was* having a good time, and it bothered him. Bill, like most sedentary souls, had always looked on pleasure as something that one watched, not as something one *did*. One was offered the pleasure of music, reading, seeing entertainment—but the idea of participation was something new. And yet here he was, plunged into a whirl of pleasurable events. It was too much to cope with, so he took refuge in drink. The liquor warmed and worked in him.

"So much has happened," he told the girl. "Up to a few days ago all this was strange to me. Believe it or not, in the town I come from, I'd

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never stayed out all night. I'd never had anything to drink but a glass or two of beer. And I'd never—well, I mean—"

"You'd never met a girl like me," Annabel supplied, helpfully. "Sorry now?"

"How can you say that?" Bill took another drink, a big one. He felt very flushed and feverish, but pleasantly so. "You're wonderful, Annabel. You and Hicks and Tubby—I suppose I shouldn't approve of the things you say and the things you do, but I like it. Every bit of it. Take this drinking, now. You know, I'm almost getting drunk."

"Almost?" Annabel giggled. "I'd say you were quite drunk, pet. Quite, quite drunk."

Bill scowled defiantly. "Wrong," he said. "Changed my mind. I'm all right."

"How could you tell?" Annabel teased.

"Well, for instance—if I started to see funny animals. Like, maybe penguins. If I saw a penguin walk into this room I'd be drunk."

"Penguins don't walk," Annabel said. "They waddle."

"So does my Aunt Minnie," Bill answered. "And she's no penguin."

"My Uncle George is a Moose," Annabel offered.

"Don't confuse me," said the tipsy young man, taking another big swallow from his glass. "We were talking about something else. Drunks and penguins."

"Did you ever see a drunken penguin?" asked Annabel, innocently. "They have Arctic circles under their eyes."

"How true," Bill murmured. "How too, too true."

"Now I know you're drunk," said the girl. "Come and let me put your head under the faucet. You've got to sober up."

"Oh, no—I'm sober's a judge!"

At this ill-favored moment the door of the room opened.

"Quick!" Bill sprang to his feet. "The police must be here!" But it was not a policeman who entered the room. It was a duck.

A large, white, fat duck waddled into the room and sanity fled before it.

Bill bounded away to the wall.

"Good Lord! I must be drunk—it is a penguin!"

Annabel stared calmly at the duck as it waddled across the carpet, but Bill howled.

"Yes, I am drunk, all right. Get me a doctor!"

"That's no penguin, dear. That's only a duck."

"Then get a quack!" Bill, unnerved by the notion of being under the influence of alcohol, suddenly dropped to his hands and knees and crawled hastily towards the door. The duck waddled behind him, seeming to examine his retreating flanks in sly silence. Suddenly the bird extended its beak and Bill rose with a wild squeal. He darted at the bird, but it waddled into the washroom.

Bill sighed in relief. "Thank heavens it's gone," he breathed. "Give me a drink." He started across the floor, then half-tripped over an object lying on the carpet. It was round, and white, and shiny.

"A duck egg!" yelled the harassed young man. "It laid an egg on my carpet!"

Annabel laughed, then stopped as her eyes encountered an apparition peering through the open doorway.

IT WAS a face—a big, coarse face, followed by an even bigger and coarser body. The coarse face had a coarse voice, too.

"Pardon me, folks," said the face, in an offensive manner. "But have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

youse happened to see my duck?"

"Do you want to show us a duck?" asked Annabel, politely.

"No," the face denied. "I'm lookin' fer one. Is it loose in here, my duck?"

"I've seen your duck, all right!" Bill suddenly yelled. "And if I ever see it again, I'll knock the stuffing out of it."

"But it ain't a stuffed duck, Mister," whined the face. "It's a live one."

"I'll say it's a live one," Bill panted. "Look at this." And he thrust the newly-laid egg under the nose of the face in the doorway.

"What's the matter with it?" the face inquired. "That there's a good egg. Duck eggs is worth money. Don't get sore, Mister—just tell me where my duck is and I'll go away."

"What do you want with the duck, anyway?" Annabel asked.

"I'm a poultry-fancier," replied the face, proudly.

"Well, we didn't fancy this particular specimen."

The face became suspicious. "Come clean now, folks. Where's my duck? What did youse do with it?"

"What can a person do with a duck anyway?" Annabel inquired.

The face was not convinced. "Did youse kill my duck?" it accused.

"Do we look like a couple of duck-murderers?" gibbered Bill.

"Well, somethin' happened to it," mused the face. "Been plenty of funny business in this hotel today, I hear. Duck busted outta the crate downstairs when I brung it to deliver to some magicians for the convention here. It's a trained duck, see? Does tricks. Magicians said they wanted a duck so as they could make it vanish. Well, it vanished, all right. So I follers it up here. Somethin' happened to it, and you folks had better pay the bill."

"What bill?" Annabel wanted to know in an insistent voice.

"Why, the bill for my duck."

"But your duck already has a bill," Annabel argued. "I saw it."

"And I felt it," Bill grated, rubbing his memento painfully.

This tipsy argument did none of the participants any good. The face became irate. "Come on, youse killed my duck and youse know it. Pay up and quit squawking!"

As if to refute his words, an agonized squawk now issued from behind the washroom door. Bill raced over.

The duck was swimming merrily about in the bath-tub.

Something snapped inside Bill at the sight. He reeled forward and plunged into the tub, seeking to strangle the mocking bird.

He slipped and struck his head—and went out, cold.

Bill came to five minutes later, on the sofa, with Annabel's arms around him.

"It's all right now," she soothed. "The duck is gone. And guess who's here?"

"The half-woman," Bill groaned.

"Wrong!" Hicks peered over the side of the sofa. "It's me and Tubby. We captured the half-woman and took her downstairs to be glued together or something. Anyway, she's out of the way, now, and everything is quiet. Aren't you glad we fixed things?"

"Sure," Bill sighed. "I heard about it in the elevator. You and those women. Such vulgar antics!"

"What you need, friend—aside from a drink, which is coming right up, that is—is a vacation from the hotel business," Tubby told him.

"Right, an excellent idea," Hicks chimed in. "Let's all go away from here and relax. We'll pick up the girls and find a spot to drink in."

"Now stop that!" Bill raged. "I'm through with vulgarity! I'd like something cultured and refined."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The very thing," Annabel exclaimed. "Let's take Bill to the library. Or maybe a museum."

"Why not?" Hicks agreed. "I'll call Mrs. Pratt and Susan and tell them to meet us downstairs. Let the Magician's Convention run itself this evening. We'll get away from it all and have some nice, cultured, refined fun."

Bill groaned as Annabel assisted him to his feet. "This sounds too good to be true," he sighed. "I've got a sneaking hunch we're heading for trouble."

"What kind of trouble can you have in a museum?" Tubby wanted to know.

He soon found out.

THE PARTY met Mrs. Pratt and Susan Foster in the lobby.

"What's up?" asked Mrs. Pratt, sweetly.

"We're going to acquire culture," Hicks told her. This remark did not exactly kindle a look of enthusiasm on the blonde's face, and Marmaduke Hicks hastened to ask, "What's the matter? Don't you girls want to be cultivated?"

"Certainly," Susan Foster agreed. "My room number is—"

"Never mind!" Bill broke in. "I'm thinking of education."

"I'll handle your education," Annabel said. "You're my star pupil."

"I don't like this," Mrs. Pratt remarked, as Tubby hailed a taxi. "That ex-husband of mine is very jealous, you know. He's been trying to get something on me for years. Wants to stop paying alimony. And I think he's been spying. If he finds me running around with strange men—"

"Oh, we're not strangers," Hicks assured. "We've been introduced."

"Nevertheless, I'm worried."

"Come on," Tubby coaxed, as the cab pulled up. He gave an address to the driver as the party took seats. Annabel climbed in last, completely ruining Bill's shoe-shine, and seated herself on his lap, ruining his morale. The taxi jolted along.

In a few moments the vehicle halted before a large cafe. "Here we are," Tubby announced. The *Cafe de Paree*. Run by a little Frenchman named Le Vinsky."

"Here, this is no museum!" Bill protested.

"Don't be impatient. We'll get there. Just thought we ought to have a little refreshment first to tide us over."

"Have you no appreciation of art?" Bill raged. "They tell me the Metropolitan is showing a glassware collection from ancient ruins."

"They have some ancient bottles in here," Tubby soothed. "I appreciate them very much. And their contents will turn you into a magnificent ruin."

Bill, protesting, found Annabel dragging him in after the rest of the party, and soon the six were seated at a table near the orchestra. The noise depressed Bill so that he drank several stiff highballs without thinking. The others needed no encouragement. It was some time before a now befuddled Bill rose in determination.

"Enough of this," he announced. "We're going to a museum if it kills us. Come on, you promised!"

Another taxi took them down to the Metropolitan, which appeared to be closed for the night. "Too late," Tubby informed them. "We might as well go back to the cafe."

"No you don't!" Bill was stubborn. "If we do that, we'll just get into trouble. I want a museum—any museum will do."

"Okay, buddy." The cab-driver entered into the conversation abruptly. "Museum it is. Let's go."

They went.

"Here you are, Buster!" The cab-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

driver ground to a halt and gestured up at a large, dingy-looking structure over which hung the legend, *Imperial Wax Museum.*

"But this isn't a regular museum," Bill groaned. "Let's go somewhere else."

"Yes," Hicks agreed. "No wax museum for me. Who wants to look at a lot of candles?"

"Only one open this time o'night," the driver argued.

"All right. Come on in." Bill disembarked and helped the girls alight. They approached the door and paid admission to a dyspeptic and doleful doorman.

"Why so sad, friend?" Tubby asked, with alcoholic amiability.

"You'd be sad, too," the man replied, "if you had nothing else to do all day but look at a lot of dummies."

"Here, now, no insults."

"I mean the waxworks," assured the doorkeeper. "Give me the creeps, they do. Dummies all day long, that's all I see."

"Don't take it so hard—look what it did for Edgar Bergen."

This remark was lost on the doorkeeper. "It ain't so much the job itself," he babbled. "It's the bloodiness of the thing. Regular chamber of horrors. I get the shakes just thinking about it."

THE PARTY passed inside, then regretted it. For it was a chamber of horrors they entered, and no mistake. Some sweet, sadistic soul had executed the wax figures, and they were fiendishly calculated to inspire shudders. After looking around, Bill decided the designer should have been executed himself. The place was a domicile of dread.

At this evening hour the dim rooms were deserted, save for the sextette, and the wax figures assumed added terror in the silence.

"Have a drink," Tubby whispered, producing a pint bottle from his inside pocket. For once, Bill did not object, but swallowed as eagerly as the rest. In a moment, confidence restored, the party proceeded.

Jack the Ripper—Landru—Gilles de Retz—Dr. Crippen—Salome with the head of John the Baptist—Blackbeard the Pirate—the beheading of Anne Bolyen—the assassination of Marat—the murder of Rasputin—the Inquisition—the Cleveland Torso Slayings—all passed in review.

By now the party was growing gruesomely gay. A few nips from the bottle primed them against horror, and Mrs. Pratt giggled a trifle hysterically. Annabel clung to Bill and her nearness did things to his heart and head. He was almost content to give up the goal of culture. A certain recklessness rose in him, an urge to plunge madly into the sea of life and battle the waves until he reached the Happy Isles. Annabel did this to him and he no longer wanted to fight against it. He was ready for anything; or almost anything except what happened.

It was at this dangerous moment that another party entered the museum. It consisted of two heavy-set, thick-jowled men Bill remembered having seen back at the cafe they had stopped at for a drink. One of the big fellows seemed even more familiar; Bill did his best to remember his name.

"I could swear they came here," said the taller and fatter of the two to his companion. "I wonder what she's pulling off now?"

"Heavens!" whispered the divorcee, suddenly ducking behind a pillar. "That man is my ex-husband, Mr. Pratt."

At the mention of the man's name,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tubby giggled.

"Don't laugh!" breathed the woman, furiously. "He's got his lawyer with him. They're after my alimony, all right."

"What'll we do?" Hicks asked. "We don't want to let him get his hands on that."

"Shut up and get out of here, fast," Mrs. Pratt hissed.

It seemed that everybody took an immediate dislike to Mr. Oswald Pratt. The beefy magician was much more like a typical big business man: big-muscled, big-shouldered, big-voiced and big-headed. The type of man who smoked expensive cigars, told cheap jokes, and knew only one master—the Almighty Dollar, which he ambiguously referred to as "Success". Mrs. Pratt, in fact, had divorced him mainly because he insisted on referring to her as "the little woman."

All this she hastily explained to her friends in a whisper as the two men peered about the gloomy corridors of the wax museum. "Now, let's sneak out before he sees me," she concluded.

HICKS PRODUCED the bottle again and passed it hastily. "Wait," he told them, "I have a great idea." He proceeded to explain it quickly in muffled tones. It was received with subdued but inebriated enthusiasm. A moment later the little group scattered off into the dimness, each bent on his or her own errand.

Meanwhile Mr. Pratt and his legal friend, "Honest John" O'Toole, paced rapidly down the center corridor.

"See anybody?" Pratt snapped impatiently. "Don't know where they could have gone to."

"If they're here, we'll find them," the legal eagle assured him. He glanced intently about him in the gathering gloom, but his professional eye was attracted by the fascinating parade of criminal activity displayed here. Before he realized it, O'Toole had taken up a position before the Gilles de Retz display and was gazing happily at the spectacle of Monsieur de Retz assaulting one of his wives with a long, sinister-looking knife.

"What's this?" demanded Pratt, halting beside the exhibit.

"Gilles de Retz," the lawyer explained. "French guy who killed his wives. Regular Bluebeard, that baby was."

"Good for him," Pratt muttered. "I wish to heaven I'd handled mine that way." He chewed his cigar viciously as he considered the last statement. "Yes," he continued, "I should have tried this on Dorothy."

"Why not?" said O'Toole, humoring his employer. "They say this was quite common in them old royal families."

"I come from a very old family," observed Pratt, proudly.

"Yeah?" sneered a voice out of nowhere. "Which one—the Jukes or the Kallikuks?"

Pratt, thinking this remark came from his companion, became indignant. "I'll have you know," he snapped, "that my ancestors came over on the Mayflower."

"Is that so?" mocked the voice. "Well, it's a good thing the immigration laws are stricter now."

Pratt became livid. "What's that?" he demanded, collaring O'Toole.

"I didn't say anything. Not a word."

"Come on," Pratt rejoined. "There's something screwy going on here. Ever since I thought I saw that torso moving this morning, I've been a little punch-drunk, you know." He walked on, followed by his friend. Suddenly he halted beside the Salome exhibit.

"So help me," he observed, "if I didn't know that was a dummy, I'd swear this figure was my wife."

He pointed at Salome, who stood regarding the head of John the Bap-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tist, which rested on top of a large cabinet.

"Not a bad figure," commented the lawyer, "for your wife."

"Ah, she wore falsies," sneered her ex-husband.

The Salome image trembled violently.

"Do my eyes deceive me," Pratt said, suddenly, "or did that dummy just quiver?"

"Must be the light."

"My wife used to quiver like that all the time," Pratt mused. "It was due to drinking, of course. That bat was always lushed up."

This was too much for the figure to bear.

"I can't blame her," said a furious feminine voice. "A woman would have to drink in order to stand living with you."

PRATT HAD the eyes of an insane fish. "Am I mad?" he asked. "Torsos running this morning. Now a statue, moving and talking. Let's go back to the Convention—I want to lie down."

"No," said O'Toole, a baffled look in his own bulging eyes. "You're not crazy. I heard a voice too." Suddenly he reached out and tapped the figure of Salome with his cane. The response was instantaneous, although it did not come from Salome.

Instead, the head of John the Baptist began to squirm hideously on the cabinet. The eyes opened and bearded lips writhed into a horrid life. It was a nasty-looking head with a brown beard and incongruously red hair. There seemed to be a lighted cigar between its lips.

"Lay off the lady," the severed head whispered. "And put down that cane, you squirt, before I bite it in half."

With shrill gasps, the two men turned and fled down the aisle. In their confusion, they ran in the wrong direction.

"It spoke to me," O'Toole kept mumbling. "It spoke to me!"

"Did you notice the cigar?" Pratt panted. "I wonder how it could inhale?" Then, "Now what?" he cried, caroming into a hooded figure that blocked the passage with upraised sword.

"Just a dummy," he sighed, in relief. The figure, on inspection, proved to be part of the group depicting the death of Rasputin. It was a realistic scene—too realistic for Pratt's jangled nerves. He gazed at it in mute horror for a moment while regaining his breath. Suddenly he spotted something peculiar.

"Funny," he observed. "I never knew that guy Rasputin wore glasses before." He pointed a shaking finger at the Mad Monk who was lying on the floor in a pool of red paint. Rasputin was indeed wearing glasses—and his beard had a tendency to sag rather foolishly to one side.

"Everything's wrong in here," whispered O'Toole. "Rasputin with glasses, Salome with the quivers, and John the Baptist getting his voice back after that throat operation. Think it's all a trick? After all, you're a magician."

"Since that torso business this morning I'm not so sure," Pratt replied. "Did you notice all the strangers at the Convention? Funny-looking characters I never saw or heard of before. Some of them came in tonight, and I swear something terrible's going to happen before long. This is all a part of it, too. Maybe I'd better resign, get out of this racket, turn in my wand to the union."

"Don't let it get you, pal," said O'Toole. "We're still out to find your ex-wife. I mean business and nothing is gonna scare me off her trail."

Suddenly Pratt was tapped on the shoulder by a hand out of nowhere.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He whirled and confronted a very tall thin gentleman who wore a streetcar conductor's uniform.

"Right this way, gents—I'm the guide," said the man.

Perhaps the guide might have explained why somewhere down the line was a naked window dummy which had once worn the streetcar conductor's uniform in a scene depicting *Murders of the Mad Motorman Who Went Off His Trolley.*

BUT MR. HICKS did not choose to reveal this. Instead he led his unsuspecting victims easily along the aisle, drowning out their protests in a flood of conversation.

"Wonderful museum we have here," he babbled. "Never saw a more splendid set of waxworks. Speaking of waxworks," and he turned to address O'Toole, "do you wax your mustache?"

"I haven't got a mustache."

"But would you wax it if you had one?" inquired Hicks, earnestly.

"Certainly not!"

"Then how about a nice mustache *made* of wax?" pursued Hicks. "Would you care to buy one? I could steal it for you off that statue of General Grant over there."

"I don't want any of your lousy mustaches," O'Toole said, wearing the look of confusion Hicks had made for him. "I'm here on business. I'm a criminal lawyer."

"What did they throw you in for?"

"You don't understand," Mr. O'Toole managed to answer, in a strained voice. "Everything I do is within the law."

"Well, I know just the place for a lawyer like you," Hicks babbled, stalling for time. "You ought to see our mounted police exhibit."

"Canadian Northwest?" inquired O'Toole, more out of desperation than any desire to know.

"New York mounted police," Hicks answered.

"How did you get the horses?"

"What horses?"

"Why, for the mounted police."

"There are no horses," said Hicks.

"Then what are the policemen mounted on?"

"Why, on a platform, of course."

"Phooey on all this," interrupted Mr. Pratt. "See here, I'm in this place looking for my wife."

"What would she be doing in this museum?" parried the false guide, with a disarming smile. "Don't tell me you married one of the waxworks?"

"No," Pratt forced himself to reply. "But I think she's hiding here. As a matter of fact," he continued, "she might be right over there." And he pointed to Mary, Queen of Scots.

Before Hicks could stop him, Pratt bolted over the railing and began to shake the wax figure violently. But he was wrong—the dummy did not move.

"You're crazy," the guide assured him.

"Beginning to think so myself," Pratt muttered. He laughed shrilly. "Perhaps we're all crazy. Maybe I'm Napoleon."

"No!" boomed a voice. "*I* am Napoleon!"

At the sound of these words Pratt wheeled suddenly, then collapsed. Tubby, in the costume of the Little Corporal, stood at his side. "I'm Napoleon," he announced. "You must be nuts!" Then he stared at O'Toole. "Don't start telling me you're King Tut, either, because this gentleman can prove it."

And Mr. O'Toole was forced to confront Bill, who leered at him madly from inside an open mummy-case.

Where the girls had found the Wooden Horse of Troy will never be known. It is enough they had, and somehow managed to struggle into it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now this beast put in an untimely appearance.

There is nothing worse than the sight of a wobbly wooden horse in a wax museum—a big wooden horse that is unexpectedly alive. As this nightmare loped drunkenly down the corridor on six legs, Mr. Pratt and Mr. O'Toole suddenly decided that they had suffered enough.

With low animal moans they fled for the door, just as the horse suddenly split in the middle and pursued them. The head charged Mr. O'Toole and the terrifying other end bounded after Mr. Pratt. Neither of these gentlemen stopped running until the museum was several blocks behind them.

Here a policeman halted them and asked the reason for their haste.

"The head of a wooden horse was chasing me," gasped O'Toole.

The policeman sneered, and looked at Mr. Pratt. "And just what was chasing you?" he asked.

But for some reason, Mr. Pratt wouldn't tell. He just sat down on the sidewalk and strangled himself.

"GREAT WORK!" said Mr. Hicks, surveying his companions. "I'm proud of you."

"Splendid," Mrs. Pratt agreed, emerging from the wooden horse-head. "You frightened that wretch almost to death. Let's all have a drink on that."

The bottle changed hands. Annabel handed it to Bill, who was helplessly fumbling in his mummy-wrappings.

"Baby want?" she inquired. "You know, you look cute that way."

"Get me out of here," demanded the struggling young man. He took a long drink that didn't do him any good, and a long look that helped a great deal.

"Why, Bill, you're helpless," exclaimed the girl. She placed her arms about the man, and in a moment Bill was investigating the claims set forth by the advertisements of a popular lipstick.

The experiment was pleasant and prolonged. By the time it was finished, Tubby had an idea.

"Let's give our wax friends here a break," said the fat man, with a tipsy leer. "Don't forget, they were a big help to us and they deserve a reward."

"What can you do for a wax dummy?" demanded Susan Foster, who had a practical mind about some things.

"Well, we could take them out and buy them all a drink."

"Fine!" Hicks agreed, without knowing why. "I'll handle the doorman."

He went out into the corridor and approached the dour fellow who stared stolidly into the night, ignoring all uproar from within the museum.

"Nice place you have here," Hicks said. "We enjoyed it a lot."

"That's funny," mused the doorman. "Two other guys went in for a while and then they came running out like the devil hisself was at their heels."

"They weren't frightened," lied Hicks, valiantly. "Just killing time for a while and then they had to leave in a hurry." He lowered his voice. "You see, one of them expected to become a father."

"He picked a funny place for it," snorted the doorman, sourly.

"Don't be silly," Hicks argued. "One can become a father almost anywhere."

"I'd hate to become one in a wax museum," said the doorman. "The kid might be born with two heads." Suddenly the dour man warmed up and became talkative. "My cousin's wife once had a baby in a movie theatre. Twins."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh," Hicks murmured. "A double feature."

"Right," said the doorman. "But she only had a chance to see one show. Later she went back and got her money refunded."

Now Hicks had intended to confuse the doorman, but he was more than a little confused himself by this conversation. "Here," he said, producing the bottle. "Have a drink."

The doorkeeper accepted. As he tilted his head back, his neck gurgled and contorted in a revolting fashion.

Hicks stopped the foul spectacle by deftly winding a scarf around the man's neck. He produced another and tied his hands and feet. Then he deposited him safely on a couch inside the hall, and reclaimed his bottle.

"Hereafter don't drink strange liquor," he warned the writhing man. "It's liable to gag you." On this remark he turned and rejoined his companions inside.

His friends were drunkenly selecting their waxwork escorts. Tubby took to another redhead—Queen Elizabeth. Mrs. Pratt seemed to find comfort in that divorce-fiend, Henry the Eighth. Susan Foster, for no reason at all, decided on Rasputin. Bill merely grabbed the first dummy available—which unfortunately proved to be Lady Godiva. Annabel sniffed at him and turned to something called a *Chinese Hatchet Victim*. Hicks lifted down Madame Pompadour.

The result was quaint, to say the least. Tubby still wore the Napoleon costume, Bill's mummy-wrappings were intact, and Hicks changed the guide outfit for a convict suit. The three women wore their street clothes. Thus arrayed, the party crept out the front entrance, each dragging a silent wax companion.

Convict and French courtesan; Napoleon and the Virgin Queen; the overdressed dummy and the over-exposed Lady Godiva; followed by three girls escorting a bloody corpse, a bloody king and a bloody monk—it was a ghastly procession.

Two taxis were summoned—for a cabdriver will carry Death Himself, provided that gentleman has the fare—and the motley assemblage whizzed back down the street to the Cafe de Paree.

IT WAS THE after-theatre dinner hour as they entered, and tables were crowded. A harrassed head waiter met them in the doorway. When his eyes had feasted upon the costumes of these unusual customers, his overworked smile sagged dreadfully. It was only by straining his suavity to the utmost that he was able to meet the commanding gaze of Mr. Hicks.

"Well?" challenged the gentleman in the convict suit. "What are you staring at?"

"Nothing, M'sieu," the waiter assured, in a voice that entirely lacked conviction. "Nothing at all."

"Get us a table," Hicks ordered. "A big table." Then, "Don't mind us, we're going to a masquerade party," he explained, "and besides, we're all awfully drunk."

This last statement was heartily endorsed by the head waiter. Never had he seen a more dreadfully drunken crowd. Fully half of these people seemed incapable of walking at all, but were supported by their partners. Some of them seemed to stare quite hideously, with eyes void of all expression. Unless he escorted them to a table at once, it was quite possible that a number of his guests would collapse on the lobby floor, and this would be a bad advertisement for the cafe.

Accordingly, Francois, forcing a fixed and frozen smile, bowed to Hicks and choked forth a despairing, "Follow me, M'sieu." The half-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dummy, half-drunken cavalcade trailed across the empty dance floor.

The bodies of the wax dummies dangled from their partner's arms, and the feet trailed loathsomely behind. Once or twice the living members of the party got their own legs tangled up, or tramped viciously on waxen toes. But the expression on the dummy faces never altered. Dorothy Pratt finally became so enraged at the antics of Henry the Eighth that she picked him up bodily and slung him across her shoulder.

This remarkable procession did not pass unnoticed by the patrons of the cafe, who gazed in wonder at the group's peculiar progress.

"Gawd!" breathed a lady from Brooklyn to her escort. "What is this, a circus? That must be the strong woman."

"Lordy!" muttered a wellknown Broadway columnist, "What will Billy Rose think of next?" He shook his head. "If they're celebrities, I don't know them. Unless that fellow with the beard is one of the Smith Brothers."

"Don't say that," pleaded his companion. "Because if you tell me that little fat guy is really Napoleon, I'm going to collapse."

Several other customers seemed prepared to follow his example. Fortunately for their shattered nerves, the group finally found places at a table on the far side of the dancefloor.

Francois stood by while the group seated themselves, then wished he hadn't. The six drunkest of the lot—which were, of course, the dummies—were brutally dumped into chairs by the more lively members of the party. The sight of Susan Foster daintily affixing a napkin to Rasputin's beard was almost too much for the head waiter's sanity. Casting professional dignity to the winds, Francois stared aghast.

"What's the matter, man, are you crazy?" asked Hicks. The head waiter refused to answer that one. He had too many doubts.

"Bring us twelve champagne cocktails," Hicks ordered. "The way your hands tremble, you can probably shake them up yourself."

FRANCOIS regarded his hands intently for a moment. They were indeed shaking most violently. He attempted to stop them by clenching his fists, which gave him the appearance of a man trying to shake two pair of dice at once.

"Well," barked Hicks, "what's the matter—St. Vitus Dance?" He turned to his comrades. "What a dive! The management is so destitute they have to employ a head waiter with palsy!"

Stifling a sob, Francois hurried away. "Twelve champagne cocktails," he told the bartender. "And don't spare the arsenic!"

From which it might be concluded that Francois was very upset indeed, for the Cafe de Paree had never served anything remotely resembling arsenic since the days of the wartime liquor shortage.

Bill and his friends were now settled at the table and they had time to glance around. The other patrons were engaged in the good old American custom of having a "big evening." The place was filled with sophisticated cosmopolites from Omaha, while at the bar crouched a few native New Yorkers, who gazed timidly at their more daring big-city cousins.

It was an unusual spectacle for Bill and a common one for Annabel. She didn't laugh, because she pitied these people and their philosophy. They were trying so hard to snatch a little happiness and paying so dearly for the privilege. Tomorrow many of them would be on their way home—back to their offices, their household drudgery,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their children, and the long winter nights.

Life was pretty much routine for most people, Annabel decided. She and her carefree companions were among the elect. If she could only make Bill understand that; learn the secret of living without worrying about appearances. Not like these pathetic couples who would return tomorrow to eternal monotony with nothing but the memory of this synthetic evening to comfort them. They were so brave about it, too; so eager to go through the motions of enjoyment. Willingly they endured the outlandish cover charges, the hideous music, the indigestible food, the watered liquor, the veiled insults of sneering head waiters and condescending check-room girls. They were paying the price of their fun—and Annabel wished them luck.

These musings were interrupted by the appearance of the waiter, bearing the cocktails. He set them down without comment, although his eyes bulged when he reached the Chinese Axe Victim.

"Something seems to be the matter with this gentleman," he chattered, indicating the dummy's throat, which had been gruesomely gored by the artist to show the spot where the hatchet had struck.

"Why, he's just drunk," Annabel assured him, tranquilly.

"But—but look at his neck!" the waiter wailed, indicating the cut throat.

"Oh, that?" laughed the girl. "I guess he must have cut himself. He's always been so careless about shaving."

The waiter received this explanation with a horrified stare. "Your friend must use an awfully big razor," he ventured, thoughtfully.

"Yes," Annabel answered. "He carries it around with him to use on people who ask impertinent questions."

This was enough to send the waiter tottering away. That night he dropped seventeen plates and three brandy glasses. The next day the unfortunate man quit his job and entered a monastery, where he remained in his cell and refused to shave all the rest of his life.

Meanwhile the inscrutable workings of alcohol were having their usual effect on the group.

"Now that we've got our drinks," Susan Foster remarked, in a practical voice, "just what do you intend to do with them? The dummies don't really drink, you know."

"We'll each drink two," Tubby decided. "And order some more, fast. Don't want anyone to get suspicious."

They drank and re-ordered. "Not much fun for the dummies," Hicks remarked. "Let's at least act sociable and talk to them."

So presently the staring patrons of the Cafe de Paree had to watch six lively drunks conversing with six dead ones.

"Why, I've never seen anything like it in my life!" said an angular lady from Idaho. "Half those people look as if they were dead."

Her companion, a travelling salesman from Baltimore, gazed at the group with distaste.

"They should be dead," he muttered. "If I had a gun, I'd shoot them myself. Especially that fellow in the beard. I wouldn't care to be living with that thing on."

"Neither would I!" said the lady, emphatically.

HICKS noticed the stares and whispered, "I'm afraid they're getting wise to us. We'd better make it look as if these dummies were alive, or some fool will come over and investigate."

Consequently the lady from Idaho had to watch while the dummies were

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

manipulated by their companions; forced to bow and nod in their seats. Wax arms were raised and lowered with most astonishing haste. Rasputin was operated so that it appeared as if his corpse-like fingers were actually stroking the hairs of his nauseating beard. Henry the Eighth bounced up and down in his seat. Madame le Pompadour sat on Hicks' lap, and that callous gentleman pretended to kiss her. Queen Elizabeth had her napkin tucked in by Bill. Unfortunately he shoved it into her bodice a trifle too far and it began to disappear down the front of her gown. Absent-mindedly enough, Bill reached down and grabbed it.

This sight was too much for the lady from Idaho. She fainted on the spot. Her companion rose abruptly and strode over to the table.

"What's coming off here?" he demanded.

Bill looked up, letting go of the napkin in surprise.

"Why, nothing at all," he answered, brightly. Then he glanced down at the floor. "At least, I hope not."

"Then what are you doing to the lady?"

"Well," Bill considered. "It appears she dropped her napkin. I was just being a gentleman and picking it up for her."

As he spoke, Bill noticed the napkin had again disappeared inside the dress. He reached for it once more. The salesman stood and goggled at the sight until Bill had finally captured the napkin, rolled down his sleeve, and waved the cloth around like a flag of victory.

"Got it at last!" he exclaimed, happily.

"So I see," replied the salesman. Then, in a lower voice, "Doesn't the lady object to your familiarity?"

"Too drunk," Bill told him, gravely. "She wouldn't know it if I dropped a table-cloth down her chest." He thought about it for a moment. "But I'd sure hate to have to go after a thing like that."

"I'd sure hate to watch you," the salesman assured him.

"But that's a mere trifle," Bill improvised, wishing the man would go away. "When she gets going, there's no stopping her. Sometimes she loses knives and forks that way, or even dishes. Once it was a whole leg of lamb."

The man looked quite sick, now.

"Yes sir!" cried Bill, gaily. "When this little lady gets really drunk you never know what will drop next. Sometimes I get so tired of fishing for things, I'd like to send down a diver."

This final concept was entirely too much for the salesman. He turned and dragged back to his table where he proceeded to collapse alongside the body of his unconscious partner. It is not definitely known whether either of them ever got up again.

Meanwhile Annabel, in a vain effort to make her dummy look alive, had unfortunately bumped its head against the back of a chair. It cracked open on one side, and a thin trickle of powdered wax and sawdust now streamed down onto her plate.

At this point the waiter returned with fresh drinks. He stood watching the little mound of sawdust for some time. At last his bewilderment burst all bounds.

"Pardon me, miss," he said, curiously, "but isn't that sawdust there on your plate?"

"Sawdust?" flared Annabel, noticing it for the first time. "Why—certainly not. It's—it's breakfast food!" she announced, defiantly.

"I'd have sworn that was sawdust, lady," pursued the waiter, thoughtfully. He was an observant, scientific-minded soul.

"Well, it's not sawdust," retorted

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the girl. "I always bring my breakfast food with me when I go out. Doctor's orders."

"I'd have to be pretty sick to eat that stuff, lady," said the waiter. "And without cream or sugar, either."

"I like it that way," said Annabel, wildly. To prove her words she took a spoon and forced herself to choke down a mouthful. Then she smiled, bitterly.

THE WAITER, however, was still unsatisfied. Glancing around, he noticed the marks of sawdust in the Hatchet Victim's hair.

"What's this, if I might ask?" he queried, suddenly. "More breakfast food on the gentleman's head?"

"Dandruff," Annabel explained.

"I see," mused the waiter. "I see." He kept staring.

"Come on, everybody," Annabel said, in a desperate attempt to get away. "Let's all dance."

Had the partners been sober, they would have avoided this suggestion like the plague. But acting on drunken impulse, they all decided to drag their inanimate partners out on the dancefloor and mutilate their arches to the raucous rhythm.

The cafe, by this time, was jammed to the eaves by a vast throng of pleasure-benders, and the dance-floor was correspondingly crowded. Many of the newcomers had not yet seen the partners and their queer companions. Now they got a generous eyeful.

The wax dummies made poor dancing partners. Bill and Annabel soon abandoned Lady Godiva and the Chinese Hatchet Victim, and danced with each other. Hicks managed rather well with Madame Pompadour, since her long skirt hid the dragging feet.

Tubby and Queen Elizabeth, however, had their troubles. Elizabeth's legs dragged along the floor almost a foot behind her as the little fat man twirled her torso. The dragging feet soon attracted attention from the other dancers, and Tubby began to get embarrassed. Finally he hit upon a solution. Opening up the coat of his Napoleon costume, he shoved the dummy's feet into his pockets and contented himself by dancing with the upper half. The result was loathsome to look upon. From a distance it looked as if the Virgin Queen was using her partner for a step-ladder.

"What a deal!" observed an opulent brunette, indicating the two. "Look—that woman is actually dancing with her feet in that man's pockets."

"Must be a new step," her partner told her.

"Well, I don't want to learn it," declared the brunette.

Others were of the same opinion. A small redhead, however, stopped in the middle of the floor and watched the performance eagerly.

"What will that Arthur Murray think up next?" she breathed to her companion. "We ought to try and learn that one." And she, in turn, attempted to put her feet in her escort's pockets.

"Cut it out," gasped the man. "This is no place for horseback riding."

Mrs. Pratt waltzed by with Henry the Eighth. The merry monarch was a heavy armful for the blonde divorcee, but she was game to the finish. She had never been known to lose a man unless she wanted to, and this was no time to begin. Accordingly she danced furiously, jiggling the dummy in her arms and kicking its waxen feet vigorously. About this time one of the legs detached itself from the body. Mrs. Pratt failed to notice its loss immediately, but others did.

A fat woman and her escort were

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the first to make the discovery. Under the impression that it was merely one of her partner's corns, the fat woman trod on the loose limb heavily. It squished. She glanced down and recoiled in horror.

"Yaaaah!" she screeched. "Look! It's a man's leg!" Her companion, who was more than a little bottle-fatigued, looked down with b l e a r y eyes.

"Whassa matter?" he mumbled. "Aintcha never seen a man's leg before?"

"But there's no body with it," explained the fat woman, hysterically.

"Why should there be anybody with it?"

"I mean there's nobody attached to this leg," the woman sobbed.

"Who ever heard of someone bein' attached to a leg?" demanded the drunken gentleman, impatiently. "People seldom fall in love with legs, honey," he assured her. So saying, he lurched forward and stumbled over the revolting white limb.

"It's a leg!" he screamed. "A bloody human leg!" A second later both he and the woman fell to the floor in a dead faint. Fortunately, they both rolled off the dance floor and under a table.

BUT NOW, for the first time, Mrs. Pratt realized what had happened to her dummy. Uttering a little shriek of dismay, she hastily dropped Henry the Eighth to the floor, whereupon the other limb fell off. Hastily, she dragged the wax carcass to the table. A number of dancers around her decided they had better return to their tables at the same time and take quick drinks. There was muttering and mumbling, staring and pointing. But the orchestra kept on playing, and Bill, Annabel, Tubby, Queen Elizabeth, Susan Foster and Rasputin, Hicks and Pompadour kept on dancing in apparent unconcern.

Susan Foster was finding that Rasputin was not an ideal partner, either. In some fashion or other she had managed to get her hands tangled in the waxwork's beard. Now, try as she might, she could not release her fingers. Finally, in desperation, she began to shake the dummy violently from side to side.

The dance floor being almost entirely empty, this spectacle was clearly observed by all. The effect was that of a young woman earnestly endeavoring to strangle her escort on the spot.

Amidst a chorus of horrified groans, Miss Foster succeeded in dislodging her hands at last—and with them, her partner's head.

Rasputin's skull slipped to the floor with a dreadful thud, and Susan, blushing as well she might, dragged the headless corpse back to her table. Hicks, Tubby and Dorothy Pratt raced after her and got ready to make a fast exit.

For the tumult by now had attracted the attention of an excited knot of waiters, and the police would doubtless be called any minute. The majority of the patrons remained glued (or in some cases, plastered) to their seats. Word had gone around that this whole thing must be part of the regular floor-show, which was a brutal enough performance in itself. So the spectators stayed and waited for developments.

Bill and Annabel, blissfully unaware of these last horrors, danced on with eyes only for each other. They circled the empty dance-floor gracefully, and might have gone on forever if Bill hadn't made a startling discovery.

Looking down, he noticed that his mummy-wrappings were loosened by the dancing and starting to unwind. Once started, they unravelled quickly.

So the patrons of the Cafe de Paree

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were treated to still another illuminating exhibition—a most revealing spectacle. Annabel, in a vain attempt to keep Bill's costume intact, grabbed one loose end of the bandage and hung on, grimly. At the same time Bill tried to turn. The result was devastating.

For Bill, unable to stop, spun around like a whirling dervish. The wrappings kept unwinding. The harder Annabel tugged, the faster Bill was forced to spin. Like a maddened top he revolved while the bandages rolled away. Finally, like a shot out of hell, Bill catapulted across the room, naked to his shorts, and dropped right at the foot of his own table. The crowd, now convinced this was all part of the show, applauded wildly. Annabel bowed and stalked off.

The management, hearing the applause of the audience, might have been content to let the matter drop without starting trouble, if things hadn't suddenly taken a new turn—and for the worse.

AT THIS critical moment a waiter conducted two drunken gentlemen to a nearby table. These gentlemen happened to be Mr. Oswald Pratt and Mr. O'Toole. The two victims of the wax museum had ceased their flight at last in a tavern and thereupon sensibly drowned their painful memories in drink. By successive stages of locomotion and intoxication they had worked their way back to the Cafe de Paree.

Now they sat directly opposite the friends, who did not notice their arrival at the moment. Bill and his companions were talking about leaving.

"Why go?" Hicks asked. "These people think it's all a gag, anyway."

"Well, I'm not so sure," said Bill. He had salvaged a table-cloth and now stood shivering beside his chair. "Somebody is certain to ask questions."

Opinions flowed pro and con, and so did drinks. But it was Mr. Pratt who decided the matter for them. His bloodshot eyes suddenly hit the next table.

"Ye gods!" he bellowed. "They're back again, O'Toole—the dummies are back again and they *are* alive!"

O'Toole stared. "There's your ex-wife!" he yelled, pointing frantically. "See her over there with that convict?"

The two men rose and ran towards the table, but the partners saw them coming. Pratt, shouting hoarsely, tried to grab for Dorothy. Instead he received the body of Queen Elizabeth full in the face. He went down, strangling in a sea of petticoats.

O'Toole received Madame le Pompadour—in fact, he was given practically an entire harem as Bill added Lady Godiva and somebody contributed the legless Henry the Eighth. Throwing a tablecloth over the two prostrate men, the party rushed for the exit.

It all happened so quickly that they met with little resistance. Two waiters, however, tried to block the doorway as they rushed out. One of them was the suspicious fellow who had served them.

"Don't let them get away," he warned his companion. "They're all a bunch of trunk-murderers, if you ask me."

As if to corroborate this statement, he received a hearty blow on the head with the trunk of the Chinese Hatchet Victim which Bill now wielded as a battering ram. The other waiter caught a similar clout. His skull was hard enough to break the body of the dummy as the blow landed. Consequently, the horrified patrons of the cafe seemed to see one man broken in half on another man's head.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After this there was no opposition. The three girls, the convict, the drunken Napoleon, and the man in the table-cloth reached the exit in safety and disappeared immediately into a convenient taxicab.

That evening the Cafe de Paree closed its doors forever, and did not re-open until the following Monday, when it became the Paree Cafe. Such was the devastating effect of this unusual incident upon Broadway night life.

"So much for culture!" Bill raged, as the cab carried them back to the Flopmoor. "I hope you're all satisfied, now."

"What's the trouble?" Hicks inquired. "Didn't you learn anything?"

"I learned what it feels like to be chased and assaulted and stripped practically naked in a public place," Bill retorted, bitterly.

"But you were so clever, so brave," Annabel consoled, snuggling close. "When you hit that waiter over the head I was proud of you."

"Were you, really?" asked the poor dope, with a silly grin on his face.

"We were all proud of you," Tubby asserted, drunkenly. "It's a pleasure to live in the same hotel with a manager like you."

"Good heavens, the hotel!" Bill sat upright again. "You boys were right about one thing—I did manage to forget the hotel worries for a while. But I wonder what's been happening tonight while I was away?"

HE FOUND out soon enough. As soon as they entered the lobby, the house detective rushed up and grabbed Bill by the table-cloth.

"Thank goodness you're here, boss, he breathed. "Hey, what happened—you been playing strip poker?"

"Never mind," Annabel cut in. "What's the trouble?"

"Everything," sighed the detective. "First off, there's all them phoney names."

"What phoney names?"

"Right after dark, characters started coming in to register. All of them had the same pitch—they was with the Convention, of course. Looked like magicians, acted like magicians, so I paid no attention. I'm just about used to screwballs by now." He eyed Hicks and Tubby for a moment before continuing. "But then I got a gander at the names they signed in the register. Here, take a look." He dragged Bill over to the desk and Bill read the list of recent arrivals.

"Cagliostro," he said. "Why, wasn't that some charlatan who lived back in the Eighteenth Century?"

"Don't ask me," Hicks replied. "I wasn't around."

"Comte de St. Germain," Bill continued. "Merlin. Why, that's impossible! Merlin, indeed!"

"Real old pappy guy with a long white beard," the desk-clerk informed him. "Talked a funny line of English, he did. Carried one of those sticks with a star on top."

"A wand," Tubby muttered. "Just like at King Arthur's Court. Notice anything else queer about him?"

"Well, he went into the grill to eat," the clerk said. "And I understand he kicked up an awful fuss because they wouldn't seat him at a round table."

"It can't be!" Bill muttered. "It can't be!"

"They all asked the same thing," the house detective went on. "Wanted to know the room number of that guy, L. Dritch. Guess they're friends of his."

"Any friend of his is no friend of mine," Bill declared. "This looks like trouble to me. All these abnormal arrivals." He scanned the register again.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, at least we seem to have had one normal customer. This Dr. Stein."

"Dr. Frank N. Stein," the desk-clerk corrected.

"No—not *that!*"

"Shall we go up and interview some of these guests?" Hicks asked.

"Good idea," said Bill. But he was interrupted. Employees began to arrive in the lobby.

THE FIRST was an elderly charwoman. She waddled up to Bill and sobbed on his table-cloth. "Yer the manager, aintcher?" she snivelled. "Well, I got er report ter make. They been stealin' my brooms out er the broom-closets, that's what. Stealin' all my brooms."

"Who stole your brooms?"

"Old ladies. Whole bleedin' snag er them old ladies. Come with er Magicians, they said. Nasty, foul-mouthed old biddies they was, too. Opened up the broom closets on all er floors an' grabbed the brooms. Said they was goin' up to er roof and go for a ride. Never saw er bunch of drunken old ladies like them before."

"Cats!" interrupted a bellhop, angrily. "Hotel's full of black cats. Women brought 'em in. Want me to walk their dizzy cats for 'em."

"What about that wolf up in 711?" complained another bell-boy. "Not the one with the blonde, I mean the *real* wolf. He tried to take a bite out of my leg just ten minutes ago."

"That ees of no useless," spluttered a man in a chef's hat and apron, who appeared, brandishing a ladle. "The deep-freeze, she is occupied. I weesh to make an ask, who rents room in the deep-freeze, no?"

"What's all this?" The desk-clerk shrugged. "I didn't rent the deep-freeze. Somebody parking their luggage in there?"

"A customer, he requests the crabs. I hasten to procure of same from the deep-freeze. I open the door and—low and beheld—ees a man, sleeping on inside. I inform him to take the hell out of there. 'Shut up' he explains to me. 'You weel capture your death of coldness' I venture. 'Ha ha!' he remarks. 'I like eet here. Eet reminds me of a tomb.' And I swear by *bleu* he appears as one who belongs in a tomb. He sports of a long black cloak—"

"Pseudo W. Nym," Annabel said. "Remember? Another of Mr. Dritch's friends."

"I do not get friendly with such," the chef assured her. "I shake of my head. I slam of the door. I run as though hell. The customer, let him go to another hotel for crabs."

"They're lousing up the ballroom," proclaimed the steward, emerging from the elevator. "Old fella in a long beard is in there—claims he's on the Entertainment Committee for the Grand Hallowe'en Ball tomorrow night. Found him drawing a lot of stars and circles all over the floor with blue chalk. And two of our oldest guests just checked out because one of them found a coffin in her closet."

"Was the coffin empty?" Bill managed to ask.

"Yes, it was empty, all right. But there was a sign pinned on the cover that said, BACK IN TEN MINUTES," the steward replied.

"Tell him about the bats," the desk-clerk reminded. "Whole top floor of the hotel seems to be filled with bats."

"The whole place is filled with bats," Bill declared. "But it's after midnight. I can't settle all these things now without disturbing all the guests. Better let it ride until morning. Just do what you can. As I recall, the Magicians are going out on a sight-seeing tour all day. That will leave the hotel pretty well deserted. We can decide on a plan, go through the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hotel room by room if we must, and get rid of all these queer characters. Clean the place up in time for the Ball tomorrow night. In that way we won't arouse any more talk than we need to, and we'll solve the problem sensibly. Now—for heaven's sake—let's all try to get some sleep."

HE TURNED to his companions. "I advise you to do the same," he said. "No more carousing tonight, please. We seem to be up against something mighty strange here. I don't want to have to call the police or get us involved in a public scandal, so let's take it easy. Tomorrow we'll track down the mystery. Tonight, we rest."

There was a lot of head-shaking and shrugging, but in the end Bill won them over. The house-detective and room-clerk promised to keep their eyes open for disturbances; the bell-boys were alerted, and the party dispersed.

Bill kissed Annabel goodnight in the lobby.

"You know something?" she whispered. "This is all doing you a world of good."

"Because the hotel is being ruined?" he asked, "or because I am?"

"Don't talk that way. Two days ago you wouldn't have had the courage to face anything like this. You'd have turned and run away. Now—thanks to my cooperation—you're ready for anything."

"That's what I'm likely to get," Bill told her. "Anything and everything. But you're right. I'm enjoying myself, for the first time in my life."

"I'm glad," said the girl, and meant it.

They parted, and Bill sought his room and bed. He had imagined himself to be much too upset for slumber, but the moment his head touched the pillow he drifted off into a deep and dreamless sleep.

He slept for several hours. And then—

When Bill lifted his eyelids he thought for a moment he hadn't wakened. Then he suddenly realized his bed was on fire.

The ringing in his ears didn't come from an alarm clock but from a fire-engine in the street below. Bill blinked and got out of the smoking bed very quickly. It was turning dawn outside, but the flaming bolster of the bed lent light to the room—and speed to Bill's progress towards the window.

As he reached it, the window opened from outside and a fireman thrust his face in. He was a pale, gaunt fireman with a sleepy look in his eyes. Even his mustache drooped with boredom.

"Good morning, Mister," drawled the fireman.

"Who are you?" demanded Bill, still dazed. "A Peeping Tom?"

"You got the wrong party," said the helmeted man. "My name's Charlie Jenkins."

"Never mind the introductions," answered the now frantic young man in pajamas. "I've got a fire on my hands."

"Don't see any there," observed Fireman Jenkins, peering at Bill's hands.

"In my room, then. My bed's burning."

"Oh," observed the blinking intruder. "Kinda thought I smelled smoke." Slowly he crawled through the window. "How'd you start it?" he lazily inquired.

"I'm a Boy Scout," Bill raged. "I rubbed a couple of bed-posts together and there it was."

The fireman gazed down at the bed, which now burst into active flames.

"You suppose I better put it out?" he said, at last.

"What do you want to do?" Bill demanded, "Roast some marshmallows

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over it?"

"Don't care for marshmallows," shrugged the fireman, as he dragged a hose through the window. He pointed the nozzle and allowed a thin stream of water to play over the rapidly-burning bed. He had the expression of a man watering a garden full of pansies.

BILL DANCED about him in a frenzy. "Put it out!" he screamed. "Hurry up—don't let the hotel burn down!"

"I'm putting it out," retorted the fireman, wearily. "Fast as I can, too. Maybe you'd like to help by spitting on the flames?" he suggested, in a bitter voice.

"Don't waste time—the whole place will burn down around our ears."

"Might burn down farther than that," Fireman Jenkins said, glancing at Bill. "It's lower than your waist right now."

Sure enough, sparks had ignited Bill's pajama pants. "Put me out!" he yelled, and the fireman turned the hose on him, sending him backwards over the still-smouldering bed. Jenkins continued to play water over the blaze until it was extinguished. Then he handed the hose to a companion on the ladder outside and picked up an axe. He headed for the door.

"Never mind!" Bill screamed, "The door isn't locked."

But Jenkins battered the door down, then stooped and retrieved a bright object from the floor.

"Here's the key," he mused. "Must have fell out while I was breaking down the door."

He trotted down the hall and called back, "Next time don't go eating firecrackers in bed."

Bill sank down on the ruined bed, speechless with rage. It was a fine way to start the day.

"This burns me up," he said.

"Me too!"

The voice came from under the charred bed. Bill blinked and stared down. A haggard figure now crawled out from below.

"Sorry about the fire," said the little man.

Bill recognized the amateur magician from yesterday morning—Archie the Archfiend.

"What are you doing in my room?" he raged.

"Hiding," whispered Archie. "I had to see you, so I came to your room last night. You weren't here and I waited around. Then I heard noises and I was afraid, so I crawled under the bed. Guess I fell asleep waiting."

"And the fire?"

"It's a curse, probably."

"Curse?"

"L. Dritch is out to kill me. Undoubtedly he wove a spell around me that would make me burst into flames. Tried to give me the supernatural hotfoot, understand?"

"I don't understand. Why should L. Dritch want to kill you?" Bill asked. "I thought you were a friend of his."

"I was," sighed Archie the Archfiend, taking a chair. "Until I found out what he was up to. When he invited me to join him at this hotel I didn't realize what he meant to do." Archie riffled his hands through his carroty hair. "Then he told me and I refused to get in the act, so he cursed me. I had to hide out and I wanted to warn you. You see, I don't mind a little hell-raising now and then, but big h e l l - r a i s i n g—that's another story!"

"Hell-raising?"

"HERE'S THE deal. I guess you figured out by now that L. Dritch is a real sorcerer. Dabbles in Black Magic. Dabbles? He practically wallows in it. An old friend of Black Art, the magician. You know him?"

"Uh-uh."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You're lucky. Anyway, L. Dritch is a wizard. He sold his soul to the Devil years ago, and if you ask me, the Devil got himself a rotten bargain when he took it. But in return the Devil gave L. Dritch all kinds of magical power—to cast spells, work enchantments, call up demons and reverse the charges. Stuff like that. And all L. Dritch had to do in return to keep the pact alive, and himself alive too was to hold a sort of Witches' Sabbath once a year on Hallowe'en.

"As long as he did this, he wouldn't die. And our old bearded friend also found out he wasn't the only one who had made the same deal with Satan. There are others in the world, lots of others. Some of them have been around for a long, long time—never dying and always remembering to have their little Hallowe'en Party on schedule. L. Dritch got chummy with a lot of them on Witches' Sabbaths in the past. Most of them, you know, are held out on lonely mountain-tops in the deep woods, where it's dark and quiet."

"How do you know so much about all this?" Bill demanded. "Did you sell your soul to the Devil, too?"

"Nah," protested Archie the Archfiend, hastily. "I just rented it to him. Sort of a five-year contract, with options. I only deal in small magic, like the trick I pulled this morning. You see, I just wanted the power to be a real magician and show up those stage phonies. Always been crazy about it since I was a little fella, just knee-high to a skeleton. I wouldn't sell my soul outright—why that would be dishonest!"

"Glad to hear it," Bill observed. "But L. Dritch—?"

"He's wicked. He has all kinds of power. Raising the dead, turning people to stone, finding free downtown parking places—big stuff like that. So all the other damned souls respect him like a leader. And he met plenty of them on other Hallowe'ens—witches and warlocks and vampires and ghouls and werewolves—"

"But what are they doing in the Hotel Flopmoor if they meet on lonely mountain-tops?"

"That's the big idea L. Dritch came up with. Last year he sort of stopped in at the Magician's Convention to get a few laughs and he suddenly came up with this bright notion.

"Way he figured it, why should he and his supernatural side-kicks have to dance around in the cold night air way out in some deserted spot in the country when they could all hold their Black Sabbath inside a nice warm, bright, modern air-conditioned hotel—with plenty to eat and drink, room service, and everything? Since the Magicians hold a Masked Ball, all these witches and vampires might get away with it as if they were only wearing costumes. They could mingle with the regular guests and nobody would notice. Besides, with all the hotel guests around, there wouldn't be any trouble finding a human sacrifice or two."

"Sounds sensible to me," agreed Bill. Then, "What am I saying? It's madness!"

"That's what I told him," Archie the Archfiend nodded. "And he got sore at me. Then, when I wouldn't have any part of his other plan, he cursed me."

"What other plan?"

"Well, at these Witches' Sabbaths they do all sorts of things. It's kind of hard for me to remember because I haven't been to one since my Ma took me when I was a little boy. But anyhow, one of the things they have to do is summon up the Devil and a bunch of fiends."

"This is difficult?" Bill asked.

"Hard as hell. Because hell is where they come from. It takes a lot of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dancing and chanting and praying, and they burn incense and raise an awful stink—the whole thing is a mess. So L. Dritch figured another way."

"What way?"

"Well, he has magic powers. And your hotel has elevators."

"So?"

"He's going to put the two together, that's all. This morning, when most of the guests are out for the day. L. Dritch and his fiend friends are going to use their magical arts to take one of your elevators and dig a shaft below it that runs down to Hell."

"Hell, you say?"

"Hell, I do. They'll run an elevator to Hell and bring back a crew of imps and demons on it for the Hallowe'en Night celebration."

"But they can't do this!"

"That's what I told them. Said I wanted no part of it and L. Dritch said I was a heel and cursed me. And they're going to do it—today."

"Come on," panted Bill, panting and shirting himself quickly. "Let's find the others. We've got to put a stop to this!"

"Yes," added Archie the Archfiend. "Before all Hell breaks loose!"

MR. L. DRITCH was entertaining guests in his suite—if you can call it entertainment to watch a hirsute wizard combing his beard with a small gardener's rake.

There were other bearded men in the room, and several bearded women. There was also a shaggy wolf, a thin old man in a peaked cap and a robe covered with cabalistic designs and moth-holes.

Dritch regarded the company from behind his hairy barricade and started to call the roll.

"Cagliostro?"

"Present."

"Monsieur le Comte de St. Germain?"

"*Oui.*"

"Merlin?"

"Prithee, I am indeed in attendance, I wot."

"You what?"

"I wot, that's what."

"Oh." Mr. Dritch identified various and sundry witches, hags, crones, beldames, enchantresses and sorceresses, plus a number of necromancers and Mr. W. Wolf, who was busily gnawing open a can of dog-food. All responded to the roll-call.

"Then we're ready for action," Dritch announced. "But wait a minute—where's Pseudo W. Nym?"

As his name was spoken, the cloaked figure glided into the room. "Sorry to be late, boss," said the vampire. "I just went out for a bite."

"Well, time is short," snapped L. Dritch, testily. "We have much to do." He turned to the witches and smirked. "You girls are ready?" he asked.

"Ready," croaked the eldest of the crones, stroking her horrid little familiar. Mr. Dritch regarded the familiar with curiosity. A witch's familiar, of course, is a tiny demon sent by Satan to attend her—usually a cat, rat, bat, weasel or goat. But this particular familiar was most unfamiliar; it was a mole, and it *had* moles.

"We're supposed to prepare the Grand Ballroom, eh?" rasped the witch. "Sweep it out with our brooms, and place the herbs on the altar. Then we're to sprinkle the walls with fresh blood."

"I'll help you," promised Pseudo W. Nym, quickly. Mr. Dritch wagged a finger at the vampire.

"Uh-uh," he said. "You'd be snitching a taste all the time. I know you, my carnivorous chum. You've got other work to do. Guard the Ballroom doors with the wolf, here."

He turned to the assembled wizards. "As for us, we've got to dig in and work. And I do mean just that—we're

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

digging that elevator shaft down to Hell."

"But the guests—they'll see us—" objected Cagliostro.

"Mayhap I can cast a spell of invisibility," Merlin offered, with a smirk.

"I've got it planned," assured L. Dritch. "We'll take the big freight and service elevator at the back of the hotel here. It will hold more passengers, and it's out of the way of the guests. Now you know what our plans are. We get down in the shaft, under the car, where we won't be noticed—and then we start working.

"Each of us has mantic power capable of penetrating the earth to a depth of a thousand feet. So we'll take turns in chanting and conjuration. First I shall chant and lower us a thousand feet. Then Merlin. Then Cagliostro. Then St. Germain here, and you others. In that fashion, we should be halfway to Hell before noon, and we ought to reach the Pit by nightfall. Then it should be a simple matter to evocate an elevator shaft which will be merely a continuation of the one now used in the hotel—we'll conjure up ropes and cables and steel guiding rods in a jiffy—send the car down before midnight tonight—and bring up our distinguished guests. What a jolly surprise it's going to be for Beelzebub! What a novel way of bringing the Prince of Darkness to his hour of triumph! I am sure he will reward us handsomely."

"I PRAY naught goeth amiss," Merlin grumbled. "For as ye knowest, should we fail to fulfill our bond with Satan and do not invoke him to our revels ere midnight, we lose our right to eternal life. Full thirteen hundred and thirteen years have I walked this earth—and I have no intent to depart now."

"Thirteen hundred and thirteen years!" marvelled one of the wizened witches. "I should think you'd be mighty tired of living by this time. Why do you want to hang around, anyway?"

"It so happeneth that I am an elderly man," Merlin explained, "and of late years I have come to treasure the boon of radio. I am a loyal fan of that program hight *Portia Faces Life*, and I wish to continue to hear the daily installments."

Even these hardened fiends turned pale at this vile admission by the old wizard.

"Well, Portia will have to face Life without you today," declared L. Dritch, sternly. "We've got work to do. Come, now, let's get started. It's getting on towards noon already." The little knot of hell's bedlams gathered up broomsticks and trudged off to the ballroom, accompanied by the vampire and the werewolf. Comte de St. Germain minced along behind them, to assist in placing the herbs. This left Cagliostro, Merlin, Mr. L. Dritch, and two minor wizards named Carelton Doppleganger and Dead Earnest.

"I guess we're all familiar with the Ritual of Penetrability," Dritch told them. "First finger of left hand extended downwards, Lord's Prayer backwards, then into Latin—the Vulgate version of Chant 33 from *A Child's Garden of Curses*. I don't want any slip-ups...nobody is going to raise a lot of dust and dirt, and we'll have to watch out if we strike water ...this whole thing must be done scientifically. Now, let's synchronize our watches."

They were carefully adjusting their chronometers when the door opened and a group of determined figures catapulted into the room.

There was Marmaduke Hicks, Tubby, Annabel, and a grim-faced Bill, followed by the house detective.

'Sorry," Bill said, stiff-lipped. "I'm

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

afraid as manager of this hotel I'll have to ask you folks to pack up and leave immediately."

"Leave? But that's impossible. We're here for the Convention," purred Mr. Dritch, suavely. "Have you any reason to complain of our presence here?"

"That wolf," said the house detective. "And those women stealing brooms, and the guy in the deep-freeze, and—"

"You know what Conventions are like," chuckled L. Dritch, deftly shutting the door. "Boys will be boisterous, and all that sort of thing. Surely a few minor cut-ups don't bother you."

"If you mean that minor cut-up who sawed a woman in half, such things do bother us," Bill replied. "There's no use arguing, you'll have to go. And at once."

"But this puts us in an awful hole," Dritch shrugged, still unperturbed. "I can see there is only one solution."

"And what's that?"

"To put you in an awful hole, too. I'm speaking of a grave." Mr. Dritch suddenly waggled his beard hideously and lunged at the young man.

"No you don't!" yelled the house detective, producing a revolver. "Stand back or I'll shoot!"

BUT L. DRITCH continued to advance. The maddened house detective raised the revolver, aimed it, and fired. At this close range, point-blank, he couldn't miss. The bullet struck L. Dritch squarely between the eyes—and bounced off.

"Yow!" screeched Tubby. "Here they come!"

And they came. The five wizards raced towards them in a flying phalanx, and in a moment the room was a melee. But only for a moment. For the magicians mumbled as they moved, and the eyes of Cagliostro wove a hypnotic web.

Bill tried to strangle L. Dritch in his own beard. Hicks and Tubby grappled with Merlin. Annabel and the house detective scrabbled at Doppleganger and Dead Ernest. But Cagliostro's evil eye rested lightly on each in turn, and in a few seconds the five humans were standing stone-still, in statuesque immobility.

"Got them," Cagliostro breathed.

"All right, let's strike 'em dead!" croaked Dead Ernest. "I'll go up on the roof-garden and dig some graves. Lots of nice flowers up there, too. We can have a lovely funeral."

The little necrophile regarded Annabel with avid eyes. "I'll be glad to handle all the arrangements," he offered.

"Not now." L. Dritch raised a restraining hand. "We've got to dig that elevator shaft; no time for graves. And I'll need the girl."

"What for?" rasped Merlin.

"For tonight. Surely you haven't forgotten that we'll want a human sacrifice. Why, she's made to order!"

"And the rest of them?"

"We'll leave them here. They can't move a muscle until Cagliostro releases them. Perfectly safe—and from now on we can't afford to arouse suspicion from the guests. I don't want five bodies laying around in this room or anywhere else in the hotel. There'll be plenty of that this evening."

He moved towards the door, his beard sweeping a path before him. "Come on," he commanded. "Let's start digging. Merlin, you'd better stay here and keep an eye on them."

"But I wouldst assist thee—" protested the ancient magician.

"Cheer up," Mr. Dritch soothed. "Be a good boy, and tonight I'll let you go to Hell."

Mr. L. Dritch, beard, and company left the room. Merlin sighed, selected a cigar from a humidor, and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

struck a match on a portion of Tubby's anatomy.

It looked like the end.

FOR HOURS the five frantic figures stood stock-still in L. Dritch's room, guarded by the ancient mage, Merlin. Alert, alive, anguished, but unable to move a muscle, the human statues felt minutes melt away. Helplessly, hopelessly, they waited.

Waited and wondered—about the hotel, the Convention, the witches, the wizards working in the shaft beneath the elevator. They fretted, they fulminated, they feared, but made no movement except for the ceaseless susurration of their breathing.

Meanwhile, for others, life went on.

Mr. Oswald Pratt and his fellow-Conventioneers were gaily touring New York in chartered sight-seeing busses. They lunched well and ended the afternoon in a tour of a large brewery. By the time darkness fell, several of the magicians were ready to follow suit. They prepared to lurch back to the hotel for the Grand Hallowe'en Ball.

Other hotel guests went about their accustomed or unaccustomed ways. There was nothing out of the ordinary left to disturb them. Archie the Archfiend had departed from the Flopmoor after telling Bill of the plans afoot for the evening. He fled hastily, fearing the wrath of L. Dritch, but he took with him the two halves of the woman he had so disastrously divided; promising her to put her together again as good as new once he had time to study the proper invocation. "I guarantee it," he told her, stifling her protests. "I'm not one to do things by halves, you know."

With the torso gone, and the various evil-doers occupied in doing their evil elsewhere, the hotel guests noticed nothing wrong. No wolves loped the corridors, no bodies filled the deep-freeze. Doormen summoned cabs, bellboys fronted and centred, waiters waited normally enough.

Upstairs in the Grand Ballroom, the hags haggled their way through the preparations for the Black Sabbath. While the wolf and the cloaked figure guarded the door against intrusion, the crones groaned as they raised an altar, spread foul-smelling herbs about, and sprinkled the walls and floor with chicken-blood.

"Hustle it up, girls," commanded the eldest witch. "We got to git ready. Looks like there'll be a hot time in the old town tonight."

And in the black bowels of the elevator shaft, four sinister figures gestured and intoned, chanted and scrabbled at the noisome air. Steeped in darkness, they droned and descended, tunnelling their way into the earth at regular intervals—dropping down, down, down.

Each completed a ritual in turn, lowering them further and further, until they were drowned in darkness. The shaft sank straight, mile after mile. There was no stopping, no rest, no diversion—save for a brief sensation at around twilight, when Carleton Doppleganger completed an incantation and they sank another thousand feet into a gushing fluid that spurted upwards in a cloying cascade.

"We're rich, fellas!" he shouted. "Rich!"

"What's all this?" demanded L. Dritch, crossly.

"Dont you understand? We've struck oil!"

BUT L. DRITCH was not impressed. Hastily he chanted anew, sinking them down beneath the level of the gusher. "No time for that now," he exhorted. "We must hurry and prepare for the coming of Satan. He will reward our zeal."

And so they burrowed in the black-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness, burrowed incredible depths to unfathomable pits; burrowed until the stench of brimstone and boiling lava issued from the very center of the earth. And then the crust gave way and they clung to the sides of the pit while gazing down at a blazing core of fire.

"Hell!" exulted Dritch. "We made it!"

"Now what?" asked Cagliostro. "Do we walk through the fire and ask to see the Boss?"

"We'll be burned to a crisp," wailed Dead Ernest, gazing down at the crimson chaos of Hades below.

"Nonsense," Mr. Dritch told them. "We don't even try to get past those flames like this. That's why we've got the elevator. We go right back up again, using Formula 819, the one for Levitation. It's much faster. And as we go, we try 622—Fabrication of Metallic Objects. To reproduce the elevator shaft here all the way along the pit. And the cables. I've retained a visualization of the construction—I can imagine the correct design, and the Formula will do the rest. Once we reach the top, we wait for the proper moment and then we'll get up a welcoming committee and go down to blazes together.

"The elevator will take us safely through the flames—our speed will keep us from burning or melting the cage—and we can step out and surprise the Old Boy himself. Won't he be thrilled when we invite him to come up and join in the fun?"

"Fun," cackled Dead Ernest. "It's going to be lots of fun, with that human sacrifice of ours. What a dame! One look at her and I sort of forget who I am."

"I'm weary," sighed Doppleganger. "This has taken quite a toll of all of us. Let's hurry, so we can renew our pact tonight. I long for new youth and vigour."

"Me too," Dead Ernest agreed. "Whatta dish that dame is—"

"Formula 819," Mr. Dritch commanded, sternly. "Come on, everybody. Up we go. It's hot as Hell down here, if you'll pardon the expression."

Gesturing and chanting, the wizards worked their way back up the shaft. Elevator cables and steel beams blossomed behind them, and the shaft shook and shuddered at the evocation of material force. Ions unnaturally altered, electrons wrenched from their orbits, atoms energized with unholy abandon, all merged and coalesced into an appearance of actuality. The elevator shaft to Hell was complete.

IT WAS dark in L. Dritch's room. Merlin the Magician turned on a light, but the living statues didn't even blink. Bill and Annabel, Hicks, Tubby and the house detective had been standing still for so long that Merlin was completely accustomed to their supernatural stasis. The old goetist puttered around as though oblivious to their presence, pausing only to dust the friends from time to time. He seemed to do a most thorough job on Annabel.

The friends regarded him helplessly as he doddered and pottered about, singing blasphemous madrigals under his breath in a cracked voice. Obviously he was practising for tonight's ceremonies.

"One-two, tear him in two
Three-four, sprinkle with gore,"

sang the wizard, as he opened up an old portmanteau and dumped a pile of bones on the bed, which he proceeded to sort.

"Five-six, poke his eyes out with sticks,
Seven-eight, put his brains on a plate,"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hummed Merlin, rummaging around under the bed until he located a human skull (dolichocephalic) which he added to the disarticulated array on the counterpane.

"Nine, ten—"

began the thaumaturge, but was interrupted by a resounding rapping on the door.

Before Merlin could summon the strength to shuffle over and turn the key in the lock, the door swung open and in marched Susan Foster and Mrs. Pratt. Both of the blondes caught sight of their friends simultaneously, but neither of them batted more than .000 in the Eyelash League.

Bill tried desperately to make some sound or sign, but the women didn't offer even a down-payment of attention. They greeted Merlin effusively.

"Oh, there you are!" gushed Susan Foster. "We've been looking all over for you."

"Yes, we've gone from room to room for hours," Dorothy Pratt added.

"Looking for me?" Merlin was genuinely astonished. "But why, prithee?"

"Dorothy," corrected Mrs. Pratt.

"We'd heard so much about you," Susan Foster continued. "We felt we simply had to meet you. What in the world are you doing?"

Merlin indicated the jumble of bones on the bed. "Just inspecting some old souvenirs," he said. "If it pleaseth you ladies."

"It don't pleaseth me none," murmured Susan Foster. She turned and regarded the enchanted friends. "But what have we here—statues?"

"Nay, they are but hapless wights laboring beneath a mighty rune that binds them to the spot, ensorcelled," Merlin explained. He peered suspiciously at the two blondes. "But why dost thou inquire, and what is the reason ye seek me out?"

"Oh," simpered Dorothy Pratt, "everybody in the hotel is talking about the fake magician up here and we wanted to see for ourselves what you looked like."

"Fake?" cried Merlin. "Ye imply I am a charlatan, a fraud, an imposter, a deceitful humbug?"

"Couldn't have said it better myself."

"But I am the mighty Merlin!"

"Mighty like a rose," sneered Susan Foster. "I'll bet you're just another Hallowe'en masquerader like all the rest."

MERLIN frowned. The girls had divined his weak spot—pride. He would show these intruders a thing or two. Accordingly he reached a skinny hand into empty air and drew forth a pack of cards. Approaching Susan Foster he extended the deck invitingly.

"Pick a card," he murmured. "Any card."

Susan did so.

"Is it the king of clubs?" asked Merlin.

"Yes," the girl replied, grabbing the deck. "And so are all the rest of them, you cheap prestidigitator."

Merlin, unabashed, then reached into the loathsome depths of his chinfoliage and triumphantly brought forth a rabbit.

"Behold a hare!" he proclaimed.

"Ugh!" observed Mrs. Pratt. "Hares in his beard."

"Why shouldn't a beard have hairs?" asked Susan Foster, reasonably. But Mrs. Pratt was not convinced.

"My ex-husband could do that," she said. "And he's a fake. Why, he could even pull a rabbit out of a mustache."

"Oh, yea?" Merlin was incensed. "Watch me." He went over to the trunk and pulled out an empty birdcage. Deftly concealing the cage in his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fungoid beard for a moment, he brought it back into view—and it now contained a large, passionate-looking canary.

"Child's play!" Mrs. Pratt jeered. "Now if *you* could get in a bird cage and let the canary make you disappear, that would be a trick."

"Or," continued Susan Foster, innocently, "if you could make these enchanted people come to life—"

"I can," Merlin averred, testily. "Anything Cagliostro doth perform I can achieve."

"Let's see you do it, then."

"Nay. I am not to be tricked thusly. These ones are needed shortly for tonight. I may not release them."

"Oh, you mean for that stupid old sacrifice?" asked Dorothy Pratt. "I heard all about that."

"Will ye attend?" asked Merlin. "I had not recognized ye as a witch."

"Well, I am. And so's my girlfriend, here. Two of the witchcraftiest dames you ever did see. So how about proving to us that you're on the up and up? Let's find out if you can get these statues to move."

"Nay," grumbled Merlin. "Absolutely nay." He stroked his beard. "For such comely damsels I wot it difficult to resist such a request, but I dare not. If my companions should discover it—"

"They won't know!" urged Susan Foster. "Just do it for a minute, so we can see. Then we'll be satisfied, and you can date us up for tonight at the Sabbath."

"Tell you what," added Mrs. Pratt, "you'll have to do it anyway before you sacrifice them, so you might as well let us see. I mean, you're going to feed them first, aren't you? They always feed the condemned a last meal."

"Sure he will." Susan stroked Merlin's beard, almost having a stroke herself as she did so. "Come on, Merly, be a sport. Gee, Dorothy, doesn't he look distinguished? Just like Monty Wolley."

That did it. Merlin smiled and drew himself up to his full four feet ten. "Behold!" he said. "No, wait. I shall permit them to sup, but naught else. Hence, be so good as to order meals and then I shall release them."

Dorothy Pratt stepped to the phone and called room service to order food. Then she and Susan sat back and waited fearfully.

BILL AND his companions shared their fear. The moment the two blondes had gone into their routine it was evident that they were acting according to a preconceived plan to release them. But now, on the verge of success, too many things might go wrong.

It was late. L. Dritch and his fiendish friends might return at any moment to take them to their doom. Merlin could easily become suspicious. And even if they were released to eat, it was doubtful if Bill or the others could defeat the magic of the sorcerer. Despite his senility, he had power.

The bellboy arrived and Susan Foster relieved him of his tray at the door. Dorothy Pratt had never left the wizard's side—in order to make sure that he didn't slip away, she kept a tight hold on his beard: according to her reasoning, a beard in the hand was worth two in the bush.

"Here's the food," Susan reminded the wizard. "Now let's see you do your stuff."

"I like not the looks of this," Merlin reconsidered. "It would go ill with me should any harm befall my prisoners."

"Aw, give them a break," Mrs. Pratt urged. "Look at them, practically starving to death. After all, you want to make a good impression tonight, don't you? What will old John

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

J. Beelzebub say if you show him a bunch of scrawny, emaciated sacrifices? I understand he likes Grade A meat."

Susan Foster got in her barb. "He's just stalling because he doesn't know how. Isn't that so, Merly, you old buzzard?"

"A pox on you!" sniffed the sorcerer. "Behold! I call upon the Powers of Belial, Azaziel, Asreal, Samiel, Seth and Asmodeus!"

"Sounds like a big advertising agency to me," whispered Dorothy Pratt to her companion.

But no advertising agency, however fiendish, could have provided the response the wizard got for his invocation. For suddenly the darkness of the hotel room was illumined by a reddish glow. A cloud of pungent vapor gathered at the ceiling and then coalesced about the bodies of the enchanted quintet. It whirled around them, enveloping them in smoke, and then disappeared.

With gasps and groans, Bill and his companions moved.

Merlin raised his scrawny arms. "Avaunt!" he called. "By the Powers, ye cannot harm me! Sup, but durst not approach me."

Bill, Annabel, Hicks, Tubby and the house detective obediently walked over to the table and lifted dishes from the tray.

"Thanks, pal," whispered Annabel to Dorothy Pratt. "But where do we go from here?"

"Straight to Hell, if the old geezer has his way," murmured Bill, bitterly.

"Hasten!" Merlin called out. "Before my comrades return to find ye thus released. And please—do not make use of the silverware."

"Silverware? Why not?"

"I had the same complaint in the dining hall of this hostelry yester-eve," Merlin explained. "Tis but a foolish allergy of mine. I dislike contact with aught of silver."

"So I'll eat with my fingers," Tubby agreed. "Who cares? I'm dying for a meal."

"More truth than poetry," Hicks commented. "If the old creep doesn't like silverware, who am I to knife him?"

"Who are you to *what?*" said Bill, almost to himself. Then, "That's right. The legends all say it. The undead can't stand silver. Silver bullets, so why not silver-plated knives and forks and spoons?"

"What are you talking about?" asked Annabel.

"Watch and see," Bill answered. "Here goes."

Scooping a handful of spoons from the table, Bill turned suddenly and flung them at the wizard.

Merlin ducked hastily and cried out. "Cease! A foul murrain upon thee! Cease or I—"

HE RAISED his hands to start a spell, then nearly had one as Bill sailed a fork at his ear.

"Grab the knives," Bill yelled. "He can't stand contact with silver."

Hicks and Tubby acted. Bill sailed silverware at Merlin, who wavered, weaved, and dodged—but not for long.

A clatter of table utensils echoed on the floor, and as Merlin's flesh came into contact with the cold silver, the unnatural life-force ebbed within his wizened frame. There was a single flash of flame, and then—no Merlin.

On the floor rested an empty robe and a tangle of white beard; nothing more. Merlin the magician had retired.

"It worked!" Bill cried. "Come on, everybody!"

"Now where?" Tubby gasped.

"To that service elevator, of course. We've got to stop that crew from go-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to Hell. And if Merlin could be destroyed with silverware, so can they."

"Pick up the knives and forks and bring them along," commanded Annabel. "Bring the tray, too. We'll serve them something they aren't expecting."

The crew gathered up their culinary weapons quickly, then dashed for the door.

"Down the hall," Hicks panted. "It's after nine. They should be ready to start by now."

From around the corner at the end of the hall they could hear a babble of voices, interspersed with cackles and howls.

"The wolf," Bill guessed. "And those witches. Why, the whole crew must be going down as a welcoming committee."

"Got to stop them—" began Tubby. Then, as the little fat man rounded the corner, "Too late!"

The clang of the elevator door told its own story. That plus L. Dritch's triumphant shout of, "Going down!"

With the roar of a rocket-blast, the hell-born crew went Hell-borne. The elevator plummeted down before the eyes of Bill and his companions, and with shouts of frustrated rage they tossed silverware into the shaft.

Flames and fumes shot out of the pit as the elevator plunged endlessly into the earth. Whatever the supernatural agency used to build the shaft extension, it was apparent that the elevator was travelling at amazing speed. There was a whoosh and a rush and then a dull thud echoed from far off.

"Good heavens, what was that?" asked Annabel.

"It means they've already arrived," Bill told her. "In a moment they ought to be back with their guests."

"Guests?"

"Sure. That crew of demons for the Black Sabbath. Headed by none other than Satan himself."

"And no silverware will stop *him*," Hicks sighed. "Even if we had any, which we haven't any more."

"The cables are moving!" Tubby breathed. "They must be coming up."

"I can't see through the smoke," said Mrs. Pratt. "Let's get out of here—those flames and fumes—" She subsided into a fit of coughing.

"Bill, what can we do?" wailed Annabel.

"Nothing. Get back, all of you," Bill commanded. The party retreated before the smoke billowing from the elevator shaft. Stumbling and lurching, they fled down the corridor as the sound of the rising elevator rose in their ears.

"Here they come!" yelled Hicks. "Every man for himself, now!"

"Bill, where are you?" Annabel stared at the smoke. "Hey, Bill's gone!"

He was indeed gone. They peered at each other, shuddering at the sounds rising from the shaft. There was a humming and a triumphant howling, like the voices of the damned. And now came a banging and a rattling.

"Goodbye, all," Tubby observed, racing down the hall. The blondes and the house detective followed suit. Hicks hesitated, then took to his heels. Annabel wavered, then plunged into the madness of smoke, flame and sound around the corner.

"Bill, darling, where are you?"

SHE GROPED along the hall. The yammering rose in frenzied pitch and the banging increased in volume. Suddenly the smoke parted and a glare of infernal light shone from the shaft. Annabel caught a single glimpse of the elevator cage rising—caught a glimpse of the wizards, the witches, and an incandescent flashing of fiery red forms. It was just a vague impression of horned heads, gleaming snouts,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

black scales and lashing pointed tails, of claws reaching out to clutch and talons poised to tear and rend.

Then the smoke rose again, there was a single final crash and the elevator wobbled.

A roar filled Annabel's ears. Something seemed to explode before her eyes, and then there was a rumbling crash that died away in a series of receding echoes.

Bill staggered out of the smoke.

"Darling, are you all right?" gasped the girl.

"Yeah. I guess so."

"But what happened? Where's the elevator?"

"Back in Hell," Bill told her. "And forever. I took a fire-axe and cut the cables."

"But can't L. Dritch conjure up new ones?"

"Not in the midst of a sea of flame he can't," Bill grinned. "They came through fast going down and coming up—but this time they landed long enough. I judge that fire will melt the cage and those wizards in about three seconds. As for the fiends, there they are and there they'll stay, forever."

One by one, the fugitives trailed back along the corridor—first Hicks, then Tubby, then the blondes, and finally the house detective.

"Bill saved us," Annabel triumphantly informed them. "Isn't he wonderful?"

The house detective shook his head ruefully. "Mebbe so," he grunted. "But we're cooked, anyway. After what's been going on here the past few days, this hotel won't have a customer left by tomorrow morning."

"Afraid he's right," Hicks said. "Down the hall those magicians are packing suitcases like crazy. Guess the Flopmoor is ruined forever."

"My uncle won't care," Annabel said. "But after all, he was only the manager. The hotel stockholders will probably sue Bill for all this. Maybe I wasn't so good for you after all, darling." Surprisingly enough, the girl began to sniffle. "Oh, Bill," she sobbed. "I didn't mean to get you into all this trouble."

Bill tilted her head up and smiled at her.

"What do you mean, trouble?" he asked. "This is the luckiest thing that ever happened to me in all my life. And in all your lives. Can't you tell by looking at me?"

Annabel and the others stared at him in bewilderment. At last she found her voice.

"What's so lucky about the way you look?" inquired the girl. "You're just all covered with smoke and grease and—"

"Something else," Bill finished for her. "When I cut those cables and the elevator went down, it *splashed*. Something splashed all over me. Can't you see what it is?"

"It's oil, folks. We don't need a hotel. We're all rich. We've struck oil in that shaft—and it's a gusher!"

Annabel gazed at him tenderly. "I've always wanted to marry a millionaire," she said.

"Well, then, what are you waiting for?" Marmaduke Hicks took charge. "Come on, let's dig up a minister tonight and get it over with. Then we can have a nice wedding celebration."

"Not a bad idea." Tubby led them along the hall to the elevator. He pressed the buzzer and the car whizzed up.

"Nothing doing," Bill said. "No more elevators for me. I'm walking down. And another thing—I'm through with all this helling around."

Annabel gave him a long look.

"That's what *you* think," she said.

THE END

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WONDER DRUG

★ By H. R. STANTON ★

PEOPLE HAVE been blasted with reports of wonder-drugs, ever since the chain of sulfa-drugs proved so effective in combating illness and disease. And it's likely that they'll hear a lot more about so-called wonder drugs, because the new medical approach seems to be through "chemotherapy."

Chemotherapy describes itself. It is the ever more important method of combating disease through chemical agents. As medical researchers learn more and more of body chemistry, they are finding that the complex test-tube called the body submits gracefully to chemical reagents, often in preference to the more drastic methods of surgery.

Prevention is the keynote of chemotherapy. By subtle chemical and physical and instrumental test, the lab men are able to diagnose and prescribe chemical agents against disease. This is naturally not a particularly new technique. Ever since Ehrlich it has been used. But the molds and spores, the chemicals and biotics have made it a more effective means.

Consider for example typhus. This terrible scourge which ravages the world periodically whenever sanitary facilities break down, is carried by a tick or mite. There has been until recently hardly any sound method of fighting it. But now the use of injections of a vaccine compounded from chlormycetin has proven particularly effective against it in a series of controlled experiments. Soldiers stationed in jungle areas have been free of the ravages of the disease simply through injections of the chemical.

The standard practice of protecting people against smallpox, typhoid fever, diphtheria, tetanus and others, is being extended further and further until it appears to be only a matter of time before everybody will receive these "shots" along with many more, almost as a birthright. In such a non-dramatic way is the one of the Four Horsemen vanishing from the face of the Earth.

★ ★ ★

THE MENTANICAL PETS

★ By CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT ★

EVERY ONCE in a while you run into a story or a news item that sends little shivers of fear running up and down your spine. Occasionally you encounter an innocuous report that seems to point a bony finger toward the future and says, "Look —this is what's coming."

Just such a report is the news that an eminent English neurologist (and amateur technician) Dr. Walter, and his wife, have constructed a pair of mechanical animals!

Roaming around the Walter household are two little mechanical turtles powered by electric batteries and endowed with a pair of sense. In the sense of the word robot, these two "creatures" are truly artificial living things.

The "pets", called "Elmer and Elsie," are nothing but steel shells mounted on wheels and driven by small electric motors. What makes them so startling is the fact that they have been equipped with rudimentary sense "organs."

Built into them, through the medium of photo-electric cells, is a "desire" for light. Light is need, a force, with which they must cope. The photo-electric cells are so arranged that the little beasts want light of a certain intensity.

It must be neither too strong nor two weak, and so the robots scuttle around the Walter household gingerly trying one place and then another until they reach light of a suitable level. When this occurs, they bask in the light, drinking it in and maintaining a calm equilibrium.

During the day, when the light is too strong, they scurry into hiding. At night they come out. Eventually their batteries begin to run down. This creates a demand for super-intensity light. This "hunger" can be satisfied by the animals' rolling into little warrens where a powerful beam is shining. As they roll in, contacts are made and the batteries are re-charged.

Once again they venture out.

Occasionally objects or conditions will thwart them. In this case they "die." Their batteries go dead and they lay inert. A fresh charge and they're brought back to "life."

The purpose of this is to assist in the study of the human brain and nervous system. While the comparison between these primitves robots and human beings is naturally not too close, it is another step forward in the mysterious region which separates living from non-living matter.

But to a science-fictionist's mind, this type of developement suggests fearful possibilities for the future. Even more at present it is a shuddery glimpse into forbidden regions. Imagine what it must be like to live in a house where these purring mechanisms roll quietly over the floor in peaceful silent simulation of their masters! What a cause for reflection! What hath *Man wrought?...*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WINDOW to the PAST

Was Delmar on the verge of insanity — or was there really another world beyond the window? If so, how could he reach it?

By Chester S. Geier

DELMAR sat there, in the cavernous, shadowed library, staring at the window. He sat very quietly, an entranced expression on his long, fine-boned face.

A picture had somehow been blended into the glass of the window, the picture of a girl, life-sized and startlingly real in color and photographic detail. In the dimness of the library the window seemed to glow with a luminous quality. It seemed less a thing of glass and pigments than an actual doorway, framing the drapery-clad, slim figure of the girl and the sun-bright garden setting behind her. So real was the illusion, that almost Delmar expected the girl to step from her frame and to walk to him, lightly and shyly, along the carpeted floor, below.

But she did not move. Delmar was not a little disappointed, but it was a familiar disappointment, and his eyes remained fixed on her, fascinated and wistful. And as he gazed, he listened to the music that seemed to breathe from the window, hauntingly soft and sweet and distant.

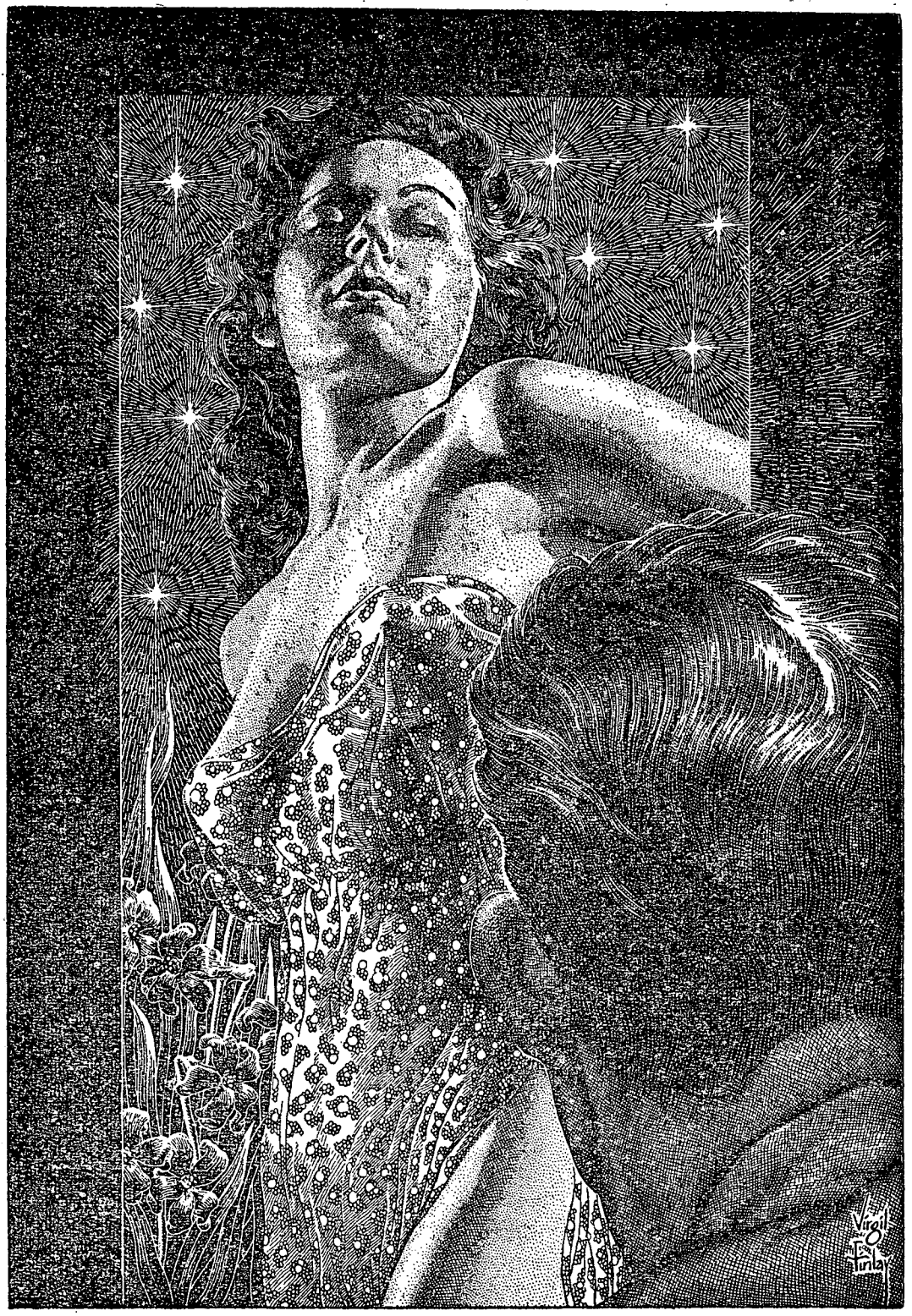
He had heard it too often to decide now that it was just the result of his over-strained imagination. He was almost convinced that the girl in the window was singing to him, that her song was for him alone.

In a detached part of his mind, he wondered, furtively, if he were going mad.

The thought had occurred to him often during the past weeks. The first time he had stood alone in the library and had heard the window's song, he had been certain that he had somehow crossed over the border-line of insanity. He had never experienced a phenomenon of the sort, and his mind had immediately rejected the evidence of his senses. It had been too bizarre, too incredible. He had dismissed the music as a delusion, or possibly as some trick of acoustics.

But whatever its basis, the phenomenon had persisted. Each time Delmar had been alone in the library, at some time of day when the house was particularly still, he had heard the faint, wraith-like melody that breathed from the window. It remained inexplicable, a mystery. And the very mystery of it crept into his mind like a thin, chill shadow, whispering of madness.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Delmar stared at her with a weird fascination. Framed in the glass, she seemed to be alive...

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Madness.... Delmar closed his eyes and his long fingers tightened convulsively on the arms of his chair. The music, the fantastic window picture, his very presence in this house—all reeked of madness.

He wondered suddenly if the enormous, wrenching shock he had felt, at his first sight of Lorna in the window, had not seriously and permanently affected his mind. He remembered the afternoon he had first entered the library, accompanied by the agent who had been showing him around. That had been just a few days after he had learned that the old Kettering mansion was for sale. His inspection of the house had been prompted less by thought of purchase than by an intense personal curiosity that had its foundation across a gulf of fifteen years.

Sight of Lorna's portrait, in the glass of the window, had come as a complete surprise, for from outside, the window had the appearance of being opaque, as though frosted or coated thickly with dust. Only later did he realize that its one-way quality was somehow connected with the polarization of light. But at the moment in question it had seemed to him that Lorna stood framed in a doorway—Lorna, solid and alive, expecting him, waiting for him.

In his utter amazement he must have cried out, or made some sudden, involuntary motion. He remembered that the agent had turned to him in puzzled concern.

"Why, what is the matter?"

He had been unable to reply at once. Then, finally aware that he had mistaken a picture in a window for an impossible reality, he had muttered an excuse.

"Sorry. I've been rather tired from the trip up here, and the picture in that window startled me more than it otherwise would have done."

The agent nodded in quick sympathy. "I know—it's a spooky-looking thing. Kind of scared me when I first saw it, too." He seemed to become aware that he might be damaging his chances of making a sale, for he added hastily, "Of course, it's only a picture. And mighty artistic at that. Gives this room a cozy atmosphere, don't you think?"

Delmar nodded abstractedly, and the other, seeing that his attention was still fixed on the window, resumed the subject in a confiding vein.

"That's a picture of Lorna Kettering."

"I know," Delmar said.

"You knew her?"

"We were acquainted." Delmar was deliberately evasive. He saw no point in telling the man of his deep and hopeless love for Lorna, a love that haunted him even now.

"She died about fifteen years ago," the agent went on. "It seems she was in an accident that happened in the laboratory her father had behind the house. Old Arnold Kettering was some kind of a scientist. Guess it was just a hobby, because with the money he had, he didn't have to do any work. Folks back in the village called him a sorcerer—and worse. They say he did a lot of queer things—like the window, there. Nobody has ever been able to figure out how it was made."

Thinking back now, Delmar wondered if that puzzle had been one of the motives behind his decision to buy the house, or whether he had simply been giving in to Vivian's constant nagging for a "country place".

The puzzle remained unsolved. He could find no clues which might have helped him reach a solution. Arnold Kettering's laboratory had been destroyed in the explosion that had taken Lorna's life. The ruins of the small building had been leveled off, and a garden plot now occupied the site. The mansion itself had been stripped

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by the relatives to whom it had been turned over after illness had taken Arnold Kettering's own life—an illness which Delmar had heard was accompanied by complete insanity.

The window kept its secret. The means of its construction could not be determined without various tests, which would have required the removal of the glass from its frame. And this Delmar could not bring himself to do. The window was both a portrait of Lorna and a memorial to her. He did not wish to risk having it damaged or destroyed.

Even this, he thought wryly, was a kind of madness.

He knew that the window was exercising a subtle yet powerful influence on him—an unhealthy influence. It was a lodestone that kept drawing him back to the past, back to the disappointment, the bitterness and pain, he had once felt so intensely. He allowed himself to be drawn; there seemed nothing to hold him to the present. All the happiness he might have known was concentrated and symbolized in the window likeness of Lorna.

It was ironic that Vivian should have been delighted with the house, that by her very delight she should have entangled him further in the web of his own devising. He had never told Vivian about Lorna or old Arnold Kettering. To have done so might have complicated an already much complicated situation. The window was little more than an oddity to Vivian, though of late she had shown signs of becoming aware of its fascination for him.

He considered this and found that he cared very little. His marriage to Vivian had been a mistake, a last-ditch effort to capture the happiness which previously had eluded him. She had seemed charming and companionable enough, but it had not been long before he had found that they lived in different worlds.

The library door opened. He heard Vivian's voice as she made a petulant remark about the evening dusk that was thickening in the room. A lamp switch clicked as he rose from the chair, and he blinked at Vivian's slim, chic figure and then, behind her, at the tweed-clothed athletic bulk of Tod Sheldon.

"Oh, there you are, John," Vivian said. She came forward. "I thought I'd find you here. Don't you realize it's time to dress for dinner?"

He shrugged and stretched. "In a few minutes more I might have begun to suspect it."

"Don't be sarcastic, John, please. I have a rotten headache." She pressed the back of a slender hand against her forehead and sent a slow, searching glance about the spot where Delmar had been sitting. She wore a figured silk afternoon dress, and her dark hair was attractively fluffed out around her small head. It was characteristic of her that everything she wore was perfectly in place, perfectly in taste. It was a characteristic Delmar had grown to find annoying.

"What have you been doing?" she asked.

"I might have been working up an appetite for dinner."

"Here, of all places?" She flashed him an irritated glance from hazel eyes whose long lashes had been carefully touched with mascara.

"Why not?" Tod Sheldon asked as he came forward also. In spite of his muscular build, he was an effeminately handsome man, with wavy golden-brown hair and smooth, fair skin. He was one of a group of friends with whom Vivian seemed constantly to surround herself. Delmar felt certain that the others were more or less camouflage for Sheldon, and that Vivian was carrying on an affair with the younger man behind his back.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sheldon had a reputation for being a man about town and seemed to do little or nothing in the way of earning a living.

Sheldon was grinning at Delmar, his expression roguish and conspiratorial. As in previous encounters with the other, Delmar had the impression of being conscientiously patronized. He felt a dull disgust. It was a case of soft-soap the husband and sweet-talk the wife. He wanted no part in it.

"This isn't a bad place in which to work up an appetite," Sheldon said. "A man couldn't do it in more interesting company."

"What do you mean by that?" Vivian demanded. Her irritation diminished noticeably as she turned to Sheldon.

He tilted his roguish face toward the window. "That neat little package, over there."

Vivian sniffed. "The half-dressed hussy! Sometimes I wish—"

She broke off as Delmar caught suddenly at her arm. His disgust had become a swift, fierce anger.

"Vivian, you watch your tongue!"

She was bewildered and not a little frightened by what she saw in his face. "But I was only talking about—"

"I know what you were talking about. I don't want you to talk that way."

"But, John, it's only a picture."

He realized abruptly how true this was, how ridiculous his protest appeared in comparison. Vivian didn't know about Lorna, he remembered, and the emotional associations the window held for him. He released her arm and said mildly:

"That's all the more reason not to be insulting. A picture can't fight back."

It was not a very clever attempt to smooth over what was for him an embarrassing situation. Nor did it succeed. As he turned toward the door, he saw Vivian's eyes swivel from the window and come to rest significantly on Tod Sheldon.

He found that he badly wanted a drink. It seemed to have become clearly evident, to Vivian as well as to himself, that the window picture was making him behave very oddly.

CHAPTER II

IN HIS room Delmar poured a stiff drink and took it straight. He waited until the whisky began to loosen up the tightness inside him, then began slowly to remove his suit.

Vivian didn't know about Lorna, of course. He wondered if she would understand if he told her. Most of all he wondered if it would accomplish anything to tell her in the first place.

It would have made a difficult story to tell; a story that went back fifteen years in time, and which had returned him, full-cycle, to the very place where it had started. He recalled the start of it quite vividly, even now.

He had met Arnold Kettering as the result of a newspaper advertisement for a laboratory assistant. Kettering had been a wasp-like man, well into his fifties, irritable and quick-tempered. Violent and uncontrolled emotion had grooved his sharp face into a permanent scowl, and his thin white hair seemed to float about his head in a cloud of abnormal nervous energy. He had been contemptuous both of Delmar's Ph.D. degree and of Delmar's ideals, still fresh, regarding the purpose and duties of science.

"Science!" Kettering had snorted. "What you call science is a superstitious, primitive cult, and so-called scientific experiments are little more than rituals performed by that cult. Only in the field of mathematics do your so-called scientists really begin to think. Outside of that hardly a one realizes that the so-complex, so-mys-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

terious physical universe is merely a matter of structure in energy and frequency. And what do they know of that? They know only what their crude and makeshift instruments tell them—which is very little indeed."

Kettering had tapped Delmar's knee with a thin, hard finger. "Young man, if you go to work for me, you'll have to throw away your fancy degree. You'll have to unlearn practically everything you've been taught. I'll teach you science—theoretical and applied science—of a type you won't find anywhere in the world today...or in very few places, if it can be found at all."

It had been no mere boast. Kettering had been a genius, and if it were true that genius is compounded partly of insanity, then it was more true for Kettering than for any others Delmar could have named. Kettering had been as unpredictably eccentric as he had been brilliant. His talents had been a real loss to the world of what he had contemptuously dismissed as "so-called science". Even now Delmar considered it a tragedy that Arnold Kettering had been too enormously irascible and impatient to co-operate with or assist other workers in allied fields, even to the extent of publishing his data. In the beginning, it seemed, Kettering had tried, but had met with ignorance, bewilderment, suspicion, and even an envy that had manifested itself in the form of derision, this from a much-published type of men who served as oracles and were more high-priest than scientist.

"Metaphysical!" Kettering shrilled, relating his experiences to Delmar. "Do you hear that? They called my work metaphysical! Why, I'm fifty to a hundred years ahead of them. They can't begin to understand me, so they conceal their stupidity with sneers."

Kettering had retreated into a shell of silence and isolation, and in this shell he had worked what had seemed to Delmar quite genuine miracles. Even while assisting with Kettering's "projects"—Kettering refused to call them experiments, claiming the word smelled of ritualism—Delmar had not fully understood just what was taking place. Kettering tried repeatedly to explain, using the only language that would accurately express his ideas—mathematics. But even this had been of an advanced, mutated type, necessary to his purposes, and the symbols had conveyed little more than hints to Delmar.

"It's because of the way you think," Kettering would snap with characteristic impatience. "You've had the wrong thought-structure built into your mind. Naturally you can't use this structure to obtain a picture of an almost entirely different structure. You can't discuss light-years in terms of micro-seconds, or mega-volts in terms of quanta."

In his shell Kettering was entirely sufficient unto himself. He had inherited a comfortable fortune, and he had added to this from sales and royalties on industrial applications of his work—minor applications, as he made clear to Delmar, mere toys thrown to an infantile technology. Yet even these brought revolutionary changes and advances where they were employed.

Delmar had not liked Kettering from the first, and his work as the older man's assistant was accompanied by abuse, scorn, and violent outbursts of rage. The only reason Delmar had remained at all was because of Lorna Kettering. He had met her on his first visit to the house, and for him—as well as for her, as he had learned not long afterward—it had been a classic case of love at first sight. For Lorna's sake he had been patient throughout the indignities he had suffered at Ket-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tering's hands.

Lorna had been some three years younger than himself, a grave, quiet girl with ash-blonde hair and strikingly lovely and expressive hazel eyes. She had dressed very simply and used no cosmetics, yet despite the restraint of her appearance, her delicate features and slim body had possessed a true, intrinsic beauty. Life under the harsh, lonely conditions her father imposed had not entirely subdued her, for deep within her, unquenched, music and laughter had remained, and a quick-burning fire.

She had, Delmar thought now, filling the glass again, been like some shy flower, opening its petals to the sun of his ardor. He remembered her first kiss, and the others that had followed—until Kettering had discovered their intimacy. Delmar had been fired in a paroxysm of fury so savage and out of proportion to the circumstances, that he had been stunned into an inability to protest or speak a word in his defense.

He had brooded over the incident countless times in the years that had passed. Nuances of Arnold Kettering's behavior, of which he had previously been unaware, slowly became clear. He grew to realize that there had been something unhealthy, something pathological, about the old man's intense, jealous affection for Lorna. It explained why Delmar was never again allowed to see her, or to communicate with her in any way.

He closed his eyes, feeling the raw warmth of the whisky in his stomach and recalling the very last time he had seen Lorna. That had been a day after Kettering's demoniac shrieks had driven him from the house. A note had been smuggled in to Lorna by means of a delivery boy, and she had dared her father's wrath to meet Delmar in the village.

He had assured her of his love and urged her to leave with him. Her refusal had been mournful—but unhesitating and determined.

"No, John, I couldn't leave my father—not so abruptly, not like this. He has been kind, you know, in his own way. And he needs me. It...it would kill him for me to leave."

Persuasion, entreaties, had proved futile. "What are we going to do?" he asked finally, hopelessly. "What are we going to do, Lorna?"

"We'll have to wait. It's the only way. Father is old and not very strong, and though it seems cruel to say, he hasn't much longer to live. I'll join you then...afterward...if you'll wait."

"I'll wait," he said. "I don't know how I'll manage it, but I'll wait."

He had waited for six months. A sympathetic grocer in the village—the delivery boy had worked for him—acted as a go-between for smuggled letters. These alone made bearable the pain of continued separation.

Then—long weeks of silence. A note from the grocer, in answer to Delmar's puzzled queries, explained simply that it had become impossible to communicate with Lorna in any way.

Obviously, Kettering had discovered their stratagem.

Delmar had been planning a trip to the Kettering mansion with the purpose of demanding a showdown, when the grocer's telegram had arrived, informing him of Lorna's death in the explosion of the laboratory.

Newspaper accounts had been brief and uninformative, but Delmar's contact in the village had enabled him to piece the story together. Lorna, it seemed, had been serving as Kettering's laboratory assistant. She had been occupied with a routine task involving dangerous, high-voltage machinery. Kettering had been absent on an errand to the house—and Lorna

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the meantime had evidently made some fatal mistake.

Kettering made no attempt to rebuild the laboratory, or to resume his work. His grief had seemed very genuine. His health had declined rapidly, and barely two months after the explosion, he had followed Lorna in death. He had died quite mad.

Delmar had not gone back to pure research, having somehow developed an aversion to it as a result of his months with Kettering. Perhaps it was because he had come to realize that the science he had once so admired, beyond a few advanced thinkers in the field, was actually a backward and groping thing after all. He had gone into industrial research, and here even the mere hints he had obtained from Kettering had proved of enormous worth. His success had been so complete, that within four years he had owned a plant of his own, producing electronic devices of various types. It had remained only for the War to make him a wealthy man.

Money and leisure had not brought happiness. For him the only possible happiness lay back in the past, beyond awakening, beyond reclaim. This, he knew, was the reason why he had bought the Kettering mansion—to draw that much closer to the past. It was foolish, futile—and dangerous. He saw the danger so clearly. It was easy, so insidiously, poisonously easy, to go mad....

He filled the glass again. He had lost count of the number of times he had done so. A haze seemed to have settled over him, and heavily he lowered himself into a chair. He was sitting there, staring emptily into space, when Vivian strode swiftly into the room.

"John! We've been waiting for you downstairs. Dinner's going to be spoiled. And you...why, you aren't even dressed yet!"

He shrugged, and she stared from his face to the whisky bottle on a nearby table. Jeweled pendants glittered at her ears. She wore a pale green evening gown, her bare, slim shoulders gleaming in the light.

"What in the world have you been doing?" she demanded, her voice harsh with anger. "You're drunk, that's what you are! Stinking drunk! What are my friends going to think?"

"Your friends," he said. "Your friends have never thought much of me, beyond what I furnished them in the way of free food and board. What they think of me now is the least of my worries."

Vivian fell to pacing the floor in agitation, her hands straining at a chiffon handkerchief. "This...this is humiliating! I don't know what's got into you, John. You never acted like this before."

She stopped abruptly, swinging around to face him. "Come to think of it, you've acted strangely ever since we moved into this house. And I think I know the reason. It's that picture downstairs, in the library window."

Awakening anger and a faint alarm brought him forward in the chair. "The picture is none of your business, Vivian. Take my advice and forget about it."

"Why should I forget about it?" she cried. "How can you expect me to sit back and allow something so silly as a window picture to come between us?"

He snorted. "As if anything could come between us, after Tod Sheldon."

She was suddenly still, her dark eyes intent. "Just what do you mean by that?"

"You know very well what I mean, Vivian. After the past few weeks, even a blind man would have guessed that you and Tod Sheldon were more than just good friends."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It isn't true. You seem to be imagining all sorts of incredible things... John, I think you ought to see a doctor."

"If I need to see anyone, I'd say a lawyer would be more in order."

For an instant panic showed in her face. Then, with a disdaining flip of her handkerchief, she turned away. "You're drunk, John. You don't know what you're saying. This whole conversation is unpleasant, and when you sober up I'm sure you'll see it the same way."

She paused with her hand on the doorknob. "I'll tell the guests you aren't feeling well and won't be down to dinner. I'll have something sent up for you."

"Suit yourself." He settled back into the chair and closed his eyes.

Her going left him with an uneasy feeling. The little game between Vivian, Tod Sheldon, and himself could be a dangerous one. He had incautiously shown Vivian his hand—and in a pinch she was no fool.

CHAPTER III

THE VILLAGE had a typical late-morning quietness. Only a few pedestrians were visible, and only occasional cars droned along the sun-bright streets. Delmar paused in the shadow of an awning and peered back over the route he had taken in his walk from the house. He slowly lighted a cigarette, trying outwardly to give the impression of being unconcerned and purposeless.

He saw nothing to indicate that he had been followed, and feeling somewhat foolish, he crossed the street to the drug store. He didn't know what had made him think Vivian might have him followed. It had just seemed natural to take precautions.

Now, however, it did not seem so natural. It seemed instead rather frightening proof of growing unbalance.

The few persons present in the drug store were seated at the soda fountain. Delmar strode over to a telephone booth and eased his long body into the interior, closing the door carefully. From his wallet he took a card bearing the name and telephone number of a firm of lawyers back in the city. Then he obtained long distance and put through his call.

"Blaine?" he asked presently. "This is Delmar."

"Well, John!" the lawyer returned. "I heard you'd gone into rustic seclusion, or something of the sort."

Delmar briefly explained his purchase of the secluded Kettering mansion. Finally his tone became crisply purposeful.

"My reason for this call is strictly business, Blaine. Some things have happened out here to prove my marriage was a big mistake from the start, and I want to make an adjustment in certain legal matters."

"I'm sorry to hear you say that about your marriage, John."

"I'm not sorry to say it. Now listen, Blaine, I want to change my will first of all. Vivian is to be left out completely, and there is to be a corresponding increase in shares among the other persons and institutions named. Here are the details."

Delmar spoke slowly and at length. Then he asked for a read-back.

"All right," he said. "Get that written up, Blaine. I'll be in the city in a few days, to sign it. I want the whole matter handled so there will be absolutely no question later about my sanity at the time the will was signed."

"Question!" the lawyer exclaimed. "As if there ever could be any question, John!"

"You'd be surprised," Delmar returned. "As for the other matter I want to discuss when I get to see you,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I want to arrange for a divorce from Vivian."

"On what grounds?"

"Infidelity."

"Any witnesses?"

"I'm positive that the servants at the house have seen enough. At any rate, a little money would stimulate their imaginations."

"All right." The lawyer's voice seemed to have undergone a subtle change. "We'll talk over the details when you get in, John."

When Delmar hung up, he was thinking about the change in the other's voice. In hinting of possible claims of madness against himself, had he given Blaine to suspect that these might have a basis in fact?

Frowning, Delmar left the drug store. That he should be confronted by the question of sanity at almost every turn he took, was beginning seriously to worry him. Even going to the village to make his telephone call now seemed a questionable act. Of course, he had wanted to avoid the possibility of having his call listened in on by Vivian or the others at the house—but this could be little more than a pathologically clever rationalization.

Wrapped in thought, Delmar collided with an elderly man as he reached the sidewalk. He caught at the other's arm to steady himself and muttered a quick apology. Then he peered at the face opposite his, struck with the impression of familiarity.

It was the elderly man who spoke first. "Say, didn't you used to work for old Arnold Kettering? That was about fifteen years ago, but I never forget a face."

Delmar smiled. "That's right. And I remember you now. You're name is Sam, isn't it? You worked as a handyman around the Kettering place."

"Sam Burrel, that's me. It's been a long time."

"It sure has. I'm John Delmar, if you'll remember."

"Delmar!" Sam Burrel exclaimed. "Then you're the John Delmar who bought the Kettering house a while back. I might've guessed it."

Delmar still had his hand on the other's arm, and now he drew the man to the edge of the sidewalk. He felt a queer excitement, which he fought to keep hidden. Burrel was inclined to be garrulous, and Delmar let him run on, waiting for an opening. He wanted to bring up a subject that had leaped into his mind almost immediately after he recognized the handyman.

Finally his chance came.

"Sam, do you happen to know anything about the window Kettering put up at the house—the one with the picture of Lorna in it?"

"I've seen the window," Burrel returned. "I did some work for the relatives that lived at the house after old Arnold Kettering died. That window is the Devil's own contraption! Every time I've looked at it, I've sort of had the feeling that Lorna wasn't dead at all, but was there as real as life."

"I know," Delmar said impatiently. "Look, Sam, do you know anything about the window—anything at all? Did you ever hear Kettering say anything about it?"

Burrel shook his grizzled head. "Short time after you left, Kettering told me he wouldn't need me around the house any more. I never knew about the window until after he died. But—" Burrel shrugged in sudden unease and remained silent.

"Sam," Delmar said with pleading intensity, "I've got to know what's behind that window. If you know something, no matter how crazy it may sound, I want you to tell me. It's important—damned important. You can trust me."

"All right, listen." Burrel glanced about him with a secretive air and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drew closer. "Last job I had with old Kettering, he wanted me to move some records out of the laboratory—notebooks, papers, and things like that. He said he was going to use them for writing a book. Well, carrying one batch of stuff up to his room at the house, I saw he had a sort of little door open in the wall where you wouldn't have guessed it would be—like them secret panels they have in the movies—and he was putting some of the stuff inside. He shooed me out fast, and I know he didn't like me seeing it.

"Well, after Kettering died I got hired by those relatives of his that moved in. They wanted me to cart all the junk out of his room—leastways *they* said it was junk. Doing that, I remembered the little door in the wall. It made me itch, sort of, and I set out to see if I could get it open. I got it open, all right. There was a spot in the wall that moved when you pressed on it." Burrel paused for a grin of triumph at Delmar.

Only dimly was Delmar aware of it. His mind had contracted around a grim discovery. Kettering had moved his records out of the laboratory a short time after he, Delmar, left—and a short time before the laboratory explosion. Had Kettering guessed—or known for a certainty—that the explosion was going to take place?

Burrel said doubtfully, "I know it wasn't right to do—"

"Go on," Delmar said, his tone urgent. "Go on, Sam. It doesn't make any difference now. What did you find?"

"About half a dozen notebooks, that's all. Wasn't anything in them but a lot of figures and writing that looked like Greek or Russian, but I figured they must have been mighty important for old Kettering to be hiding them. I didn't see any sense in putting them back, because they'd never do anybody any good, hid away like that. I put them with the rest of the stuff I was moving out, and the relatives told me to burn everything up. They were a cold and uppity bunch, and I didn't see any use in telling them what I'd found. It wouldn't have made any difference to them, anyhow."

"What happened to those notebooks?" Delmar demanded. "You didn't burn them, Sam?"

"I kept them," Burrel said. "And some other stuff, too." He looked defiant. "What those relatives were paying me, I thought I had a right to earn some extra cash by selling what I could."

Delmar caught at the other's arm. "Sam—you didn't sell the notebooks!"

Burrel shrugged. "Well, I showed them to a physics teacher from the high school in the next town and asked him if they were worth anything. I told him they were part of some stuff Kettering's relatives were throwing away. This teacher couldn't make heads or tails out of what was in the notebooks, though. He said they were written in a sort of scientific code, and it wasn't worth anything to anybody unless they knew how to read it."

"The notebooks," Delmar said in desperation. "Where are they now?"

"Why, I got them up in the attic at home. Didn't see any use in—"

"I want those notebooks. I want you to take me there, Sam."

"But I just came to town, and—"

"Here." Delmar fumbled for his wallet and shoved bills into Burrel's hands. "I want those notebooks—and I want them right away."

"All right," Burrel said, staring at the bills. "My truck's parked just around the corner. Let's go."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER IV

IT WAS well toward the middle of the afternoon when Sam Burrel dropped Delmar off in front of the house. With the notebooks under one arm, Delmar quietly let himself into the hall. From the direction of the living room he heard laughter and the sound of a piano. His mouth had a wry twist as he continued toward the library, hoping to slip by unnoticed. The notebooks pulled at him with a consuming hunger, and he wanted to avoid Vivian and her guests.

He heard swift footsteps behind him as he passed the living room entrance, and he turned to see Vivian hurry toward him.

"John! Where have you been all day? I was beginning to grow badly worried." Her dark eyes lingered curiously on the objects he carried.

"I just took a walk down to the village," he explained. "Ran into an old acquaintance and came off with some scientific material he had kicking around." He indicated the notebooks with a casual wave of his hand and prepared to turn away. "I'm going to do a little research work in the library."

Tod Sheldon appeared suddenly, a glass in one hand, his handsome face flushed. "Hey, Viv, you should've heard what—" He saw Delmar. "Hello, there! Long time no see."

"For me," Delmar grunted, "it hasn't hardly been long enough." He was moving toward the library door when he heard Vivian's barely audible murmur behind him.

"There he goes again!"

Delmar locked the door behind him and stood for a long moment, looking at the window picture of Lorna. Her smile seemed expectant, sympathetic, as if, somehow, she understood his purpose and approved. The uncanny realism of the portrait caught at him with a familiar poignancy. He listened for the music, and presently he heard it, ethereally soft and sweet.

"Maybe I'll know the why and how of this, Lorna," he whispered. "Maybe I'll know at last."

He shook himself a little and walked over to a desk. He placed the notebooks on it and removed his hat and jacket. Then, lighting a cigarette and loosening his collar, he opened the first of the notebooks and bent over it with frowningly intent eyes.

The writing was partly in a shorthand code and partly in mathematical symbols. Both had been evolved by Kettering to fit his unusual ideas and techniques, and while meaningless to others, Delmar had worked for Kettering long enough to have gained an understanding of them. His only serious problem was to fill in the memory gaps of fifteen years.

He began making notes to aid him in his decipherings. His progress was slow and difficult at first, but the doors of memory began opening and his deductions from context enabled him to close other gaps. The notes grew, while the sunlight dimmed and the shadows of evening deepened in the library.

A knock at the door finally interrupted him. He heard Vivian's muffled voice, and he rose with a feeling of irritation and deep reluctance.

"What is it now?" he demanded as he opened the door.

"John, what is the matter with you? Aren't you coming out of there for dinner?"

He considered the prospect briefly, recalling now that he had gone without lunch. But he could not bring himself to desert the notebooks, even temporarily.

"I'm just getting started with the work I'm doing," he said. "It's important, and I'd hate to drop it at this point. Have a tray sent in, will

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you?"

She sent a sharp glance into the darkening room behind him. "Just how long is this going to go on?"

"Until I find out something I want to know."

"And may I ask what that is?"

He said quietly, "Look, Vivian, you worry about your end of things, and I'll worry about mine."

"Well, I'd say this was included in my end of things," she returned. "You could at least make a pretense of being sociable when we have guests in the house."

"They're doing fine without me around. We covered the subject thoroughly enough last night. Now let me get back to work."

Vivian's dark eyes brimmed with a hot light that seemed imminently about to spill over into angry words. But she remained silent, turning away with a shrug.

Delmar went back to his desk and switched on a lamp. A short time later a servant entered with a tray of food, and he consumed this while continuing his work on the notes.

By that night, with his notes as a basis, he was able to skim through the various notebooks and narrow down his field of search. Two gave promise of containing the information he sought, and he put these aside for more intensive study.

Three days passed, during which Delmar barely stirred outside of the library. He grew hollow-eyed from insufficient sleep, his hair was perpetually rumpled and his face carelessly shaved. He had hardly bothered to change his clothing, and while trays were brought in to him at regular intervals, he ate only when thought of food crossed his mind.

He was practically alone at the house, for Vivian's week-end guests had left, and she herself had accompanied them, explaining that she wished to spend several days in the city to do some shopping. Thought of Vivian had brought a hazy recollection of his business with Blaine, but the urgency of it had gone. He was vaguely aware that his neglect of Blaine was unwise, yet he was being carried along by currents that swept all other matters from his mind.

His notes had grown to imposing proportions, though his success in deciphering Kettering's code-like data remained incomplete. Nor did he fully understand even what he had managed to translate, since it represented the ultimate development of Kettering's already highly evolved work. Instead of a clear picture, Delmar found himself with a rough sketch, the details of which were only dimly suggested. Seated at the desk, he went over it again with dogged persistence.

Kettering, it now seemed clear enough, had pictured the objective physical world as a four-dimensional super-stratum, which was characterized by the infiniteness and perpetuity of energy and being. To limited sense perceptions and instruments, abstractions from the super-stratum appeared as finite three-dimensional cross-sections. Three-dimensional objects, in other words, were "shadows" of four-dimensional "extensions", and were thus illusory. There was no ultimate reality, but only a relative point of view.

Extensions had orientation within the super-stratum up to the instantaneous "present" in any particular system of space-time. A reorientation or displacement involved the infinite energy of the super-stratum and accordingly took place at the speed of light, and at a right-angle to the original orientation. From the three-dimensional point of view, the relatively dynamic became the relatively static, and therefore a three-dimensional object became a two dimen-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sional cross-section, or shadow. Here the Lorentz-FitzGerald contraction was in the direction of "thickness". Equilibrium of the energy relationships between the extension and the super-stratum was reached in another system of space-time, on the plane of the probability-future.

Delmar's formulation had never been clearer. For the first time the problem was beginning to make sense, and he pursued his reasoning in mounting excitement.

A human being, of course, was a three-dimensional object, a cross-section of a four-dimensional extension. Subjected to a process utilizing the infinite energy of the super-stratum, this object could literally be shifted into another system of space-time. The object thus had extension in the original system up to the point, or instant, of application of the process. Beyond this point in the original system the object no longer had extension or three-dimensional reality, but remained as a two-dimensional cross-section or shadow, since this was all that now had extension in that system.

A two-dimensional shadow would be superimposed against any surface that came within the field of influence of the process, a wall—or a window. Two systems of space-time would meet here at right angles, and as a result there would be certain abnormal phenomena, among which would be a faintly audible "singing".

The process itself involved three-dimensional abstractions from the basic energy of the super-stratum in the form of electro-magnetic frequencies. It was fully reversible, infinite in one direction, finite in the other. The transformation was essentially one of degree rather than kind, since the only real difference was in the point of view. From the three-dimensional point of view, an electro-magnetic process directly involving the super-stratum would have perpetuity and would be self-sustaining by its very nature.

A haze had finally cleared away. Delmar sat stunned at what was revealed. It was incredible, bizarre—but it fitted perfectly with certain other sinister facts.

There was, first of all, the shadow of insanity that had lain over Arnold Kettering's unquestioned genius. A direct symptom of this had been a pathological devotion to Lorna, which would not permit him to share her affection with another man. Threatened with what he had evidently considered her imminent loss, he had used his abnormally advanced scientific knowledge in retaliation.

It had been no coincidence that Kettering had moved his records from the laboratory before the explosion. His plans had already been made. Lorna's disappearance would have raised questions and had to be accounted for in a way that would be definite and final. She had not been in the laboratory at the instant that the explosion, arranged by Kettering, took place. She had gone on her incredible journey a short time before.

Kettering had paid a ruinous price for success in his campaign against Delmar. In the loneliness to which he had doomed himself, remorse and guilt had hastened the final crumbling of his mind. This knowledge was the only satisfaction Delmar now had.

Or—his eyes slowly widened on the picture—was it? Was Lorna actually gone beyond reclaim—dead? What was death in Kettering's conception but the extinction of a single individual cross-section—a shadow, an illusion? The four-dimensional extension remained, having in Lorna's case been shifted, or bent, to a probability-future plane. And where could this be except in the "direction" of the window?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Delmar stood up, breathing fast, a leaping excitement mirrored in his face. The window . . an electro-magnetic process forming a focus, an outlet, for the infinite energy of the super-stratum—a process that was fully reversible. Alter the focus—and the response was on an infinite scale. A miracle could be accomplished. An extension once bent could be bent again.

Lorna could be brought back. Fundamentally it was as simple as that.

CHAPTER V

BUT IN practice—

Delmar sat at the desk in the library again, his elbows on its paper-littered surface and his head resting against his clasped hands. He stared down at a sheet of equations with morose, brooding eyes. During the past month difficulties and problems of all types had arisen to block his path, and he wondered now if the problem he had set for himself were not an insurmountable one.

He sat back, sighing, and ran a hand over his unshaven jaw. His face was haggard and slow. He had lost weight, and dark shadows lay under his cheekbones.

His world had become even more strictly bounded by the walls of the library. He seldom left it, taking his meals there and sleeping there—when he slept at all—on a cot that he'd had moved in.

He had seen little of Vivian throughout the weeks that had passed. In his mind their relationship had become something extinct and distant. Caught up in the complexities and disappointments of his work, he had no patience with her questions and protests. Her return from the city had been followed by a bitter argument, and shortly afterward she had left again. He had not seen her since.

There had been a telephone call from Blaine, which Delmar in his preoccupation had ignored. Only later, when he received a puzzled note of inquiry from Blaine, did he remember that the lawyer had called at all. Delmar had made a new appointment, but this too had been forgotten.

Abruptly Delmar swung the palms of his hands to the desk top in a flat crash of sound and heaved to his feet. His mouth was twisted in an agonized grimace. He walked to stand before the window picture of Lorna, bright with late-morning sunshine.

Was it imagination—or did an echo of his own distress show in her hazel eyes? Had a hint of pleading touched her face?

His misery deepened, and his glance went to the lattice-like framework, like a skeletal doorway, which he had erected against the outline of the window. The framework supported an intricate maze of wires, and on each side of it were long workbenches piled high with a jumble of apparatus, predominant among which were several banks of huge vacuum tubes.

The library had been almost completely emptied of furniture to make room for the equipment Delmar needed. Heavy cables made serpentine patterns across the floor. Against one wall was a row of generators and transformers. In the middle of the room stood a tall switchboard, covered with rows of meter faces, switches, and control dials.

The main apparatus was still in an experimental stage. Many refinements were needed before it would accomplish what Delmar hoped to do. These required time, and time was a factor he bitterly grudged. He could not escape the realization that he could have made swifter progress with a deeper understanding of Kettering's notes and figures. Even with only the hints and guesses he had to go on now,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he could have done more if he had spent the last ten years at engineering work in a laboratory instead of at a desk.

The thought of failure haunted him. To have the answers he needed just within reach, yet elude him, was maddening. He had thrown everything else aside to make this effort, and defeat would leave him little or nothing to return to. But he doubted whether he cared to return at all, for he had stood in the dazzling brilliance of a godlike, potential power, and the world he had known could never be the same again.

A knock at the library door made him turn sharply, startled. It was the housekeeper, with the information that two men, complete strangers to Delmar, had arrived at the house.

"They want to talk to you, Mr. Delmar."

"What about?"

"They said something about the work you've been doing."

Delmar rubbed his jaw, frowning. "Tell them to wait, then. I'll need time to freshen up."

The two men were seated in the living room when Delmar joined them a short time later. One was a slight, youngish man, with pale eyes and sharp features, the other stocky and middle-aged, with a full-cheeked jovial face and wiry gray hair.

It was the older man who rose and stepped forward. "Mr. Delmar? I'm Andrew Glasser, and this is my associate, Norton Plimsoll."

Delmar shook hands and gestured the pair back to their seats. He dropped into a nearby chair. "I understand you're interested in the experiments I've been making here," he told Glasser. "I hadn't known it was general knowledge."

The other spread his plump hands. "Gossip, let us say. I have acquaintances in the village. You see, Mr. Delmar, I have been interested for quite some time in the window portrait Arnold Kettering made of his daughter. Several years back I had the opportunity to examine the window, having persuaded the people who owned the house then to allow me to do so. My main interest has been to determine the method used in making the portrait. Perhaps it has occurred to you that there are important commercial applications for that sort of thing."

Delmar shrugged. "I've thought of it. But the method is...well, too difficult for commercial application."

"Ah!" Glasser leaned forward in sudden eagerness. "Then it would seem that you understand the method."

"I have a general understanding of the theory involved. The technical and engineering end is quite another matter."

"Have you found this impossible to solve?"

"So far," Delmar said. He had the haunted feeling again, and it brought an irritation with Glasser and his questions.

Glasser was still leaning forward. He hesitated and then said slowly, "Mr. Delmar, since it seems such a difficult problem, I wonder if it would be presumptuous of me to inquire just what is the reason for your interest in the window portrait."

"It's personal." Delmar was aware that his tone had made his irritation obvious.

"Of course," Glasser said quickly. "I hope you'll pardon my curiosity." He indicated Plimsoll. "My associate is deeply interested in the portrait, Mr. Delmar. I wonder if you would be so kind as to allow him to see it."

Delmar caught himself on the verge of a refusal. While certainly inquisitive, the two men appeared harmless enough. There would be no point in slighting them.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He stood up. "All right, come along."

After their first glances about the haphazardly littered library, Glasser and Plimsoll concentrated their attention on the window. They were silent for a long moment. Finally Glasser turned to his companion.

"You hear the sound?"

"Yes." Plimsoll's pale eyes were wondering. "Almost like music. What on earth causes it?"

"Electro-magnetic fields," Delmar said. "The merging and overlapping of frequencies produces audible sound. It's like the ancient idea of the music of the spheres."

The two were silent again. Plimsoll said slowly:

"The picture's so incredibly life-like. One can hardly believe the girl is dead."

"She isn't dead," Delmar returned sharply. "Not in the sense that we understand death." It was, he realized abruptly, a fantastic statement, and he felt a need to justify it. Glasser and Plimsoll were staring at him in evident disbelief.

His explanation was longer than he originally intended it to be. Enthusiasm for his subject fired him, and after his many weeks of self-enforced loneliness it was a relief to talk, especially to persons who gave every indication of being deeply interested and sympathetic.

Only after Glasser and Plimsoll had gone did he realize that he had said too much. Recalling his words, he felt a pang of dismay. They could only have sounded like the wild ravings of a deluded man. Kettering's work had been so advanced, that he couldn't possibly have made Glasser and Plimsoll understand. And Kettering had died insane, which in the final analysis placed his ideas in a suspicious light.

After his first reactions, Delmar shrugged the incident aside. What Glasser and Plimsoll thought mattered nothing to him. He threw himself back into his experiments.

One afternoon a week later Delmar stood before the switchboard in the library, watching meter faces. The hum of generators filled the room. Flickering needles told him the old, familiar story of failure, and his shoulders sagged with the deathly weariness he had been fighting back.

He was convinced now that the experiments were futile. He simply did not know enough. He had allowed himself to accept inferences as facts, and had gambled on sheer chance to show him the road to success. He knew now that the odds were too high.

More time was needed. He had to begin all over, to dig back into Arnold Kettering's notebooks for the all-important details he had missed.

Time . . . *time!* In despair he turned to gaze at the window picture of Lorna, and it seemed to him that her smile had the quality of pity.

"I'm afraid," he whispered. "Afraid, Lorna. I have the feeling that time is playing against me."

He did not understand how. But he sensed that emotional forces were building up within him to the point of an explosion. There had been too much of hope and failure, too much of longings and disappointments.

A knock at the library door broke the humming stillness. Delmar stared at the panel for a moment, then crossed the room slowly. Instants later he found himself looking at Vivian. A small group of men stood behind her, and with a shock of recognition he saw that one of them was Glasser. The faces of the men had a grim purposefulness of expression that filled him with bewilderment and a dull alarm.

"Hello, John," Vivian said. Her dark eyes glittered with a nervous excitement. "Aren't you going to invite

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

us in?"

He stood aside to allow the group to file into the library. There were four of the men. Glasser avoided Delmar's eyes as he strode past.

"What is this all about?" Delmar demanded, turning to Vivian.

Her glance shifted evasively. "We might say it's for your own good, John."

"I don't get it," he said slowly. "Just what are you up to, Vivian? I thought I made it quite clear that I wouldn't stand for your meddling in what I chose to do."

"I think you're going to stand for it after all—whether you like it or not." She indicated Glasser. "You remember this man?"

Delmar nodded, and his eyes narrowed with understanding as they swung to Glasser's fleshy face. "This has something to do with the window."

"Not exactly," Glasser said. "I'm afraid my previous visit was in the nature of a ruse, Mr. Delmar. The window was not my reason for calling on you. It was merely a convenient pretext to engage you in conversation and...ah, to study you. I am, you see, a psychiatrist. Norton Plimsoll was a physician."

"Psychiatrist...." Delmar's eyes returned to Vivian in dawning comprehension. His earlier alarm was now a hard pulsing in his chest.

Vivian said swiftly, "You've been allowing this silly picture window to drive you out of your head, John. I couldn't stand by and just let it happen. I've seen how strangely you've been acting. Mr. Glasser has seen it. And...well, I've obtained a court order to have you committed to a sanitarium. What you need is rest and quiet, John, don't you see?"

Her words washed over him. Beneath her outward nervousness he detected eagerness and triumph. Vivian, he realized with a chill touch of panic, had played her cards well.

He had revealed his knowledge of her intimacy with Tod Sheldon. Evidently she had seen herself in danger of being divorced and cut off from his wealth. By having him legally declared insane and committed to an institution, she would obtain control over the money—indefinite control, for being committed might very well mean for life. Sanity or the lack of it would make very little difference, since bribes would keep him imprisoned as securely as in any jail. Vivian would be able to carry on her affair with Tod Sheldon in luxury and without interference.

Delmar knew now that he had been a fool to neglect his own opportunities. He should have carried out the original plans he had made with Blaine. By immersing himself in his experiments he had betrayed to Vivian the fact that he intended no immediate moves against her; and she had cunningly bided her time until he had become emotionally entangled and upset.

Now it was too late. He realized that he had no real defense. It would not be enough to show Kettering's notebooks as proof that his experiments had been mentally sound. Kettering's advanced ideas and his use of code would puzzle almost any scientist and lead inevitably to the conclusion that Delmar had become fully as mad as Kettering had been.

He saw himself hopelessly trapped, and a savage anger swept him. He started abruptly toward Vivian.

"You scheming, lying little devil! This is a rotten frame-up! You know it—and I'll make you admit it!"

She stepped backward in convulsive fright. The men about her jumped to intervene.

"Here, now!" one of them said. He was a burly man, obviously a male nurse. "No rough stuff."

"Stop him!" Glasser said. "He's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dangerous."

With furious strength Delmar broke through the barrier of restraining arms. Vivian whirled to run deeper into the library, her face contorted in fear. What happened then happened very swiftly.

Vivian's foot caught in one of the cables that ran across the floor. In the next instant, with a choked scream, she was flying with outflung arms at the switchboard. The generators were still running; powerful currents existed at the various switchboard connections. Under the impact of Vivian's body it toppled. There was a flash of brilliant, blue-white light, the sharp odor of ozone—and Vivian lay twisted and still.

Delmar checked himself, staring, shocked out of his rage. For stunned instants a heavy silence filled the room. Then there were shouts as Glasser and the others ran forward.

"Get him!"

"He killed her!"

Delmar took a deep breath. Almost instinctively his eyes went to the window picture of Lorna, and he knew just what he had to do then. The electro-magnetic process was one of dynamic equilibrium, delicate balance. Upset that balance sharply, and—

Suddenly he discovered that he had been blind. He had been trying, in effect, to bring Lorna through a doorway. What Kettering had completely overlooked, and what he himself had overlooked until now, was that the process was full reversible. The doorway was a doorway in more directions than one. And the process, after all, was self-sustaining.

Fingers closed on Delmar's arm. He twisted and struck out, and then, with a breathless, eager laugh, he was running across the gap that remained—plunging toward the window. His hurtling body went through the opening in the lattice-like framework around the window and was briefly silhouetted against the sunlit glass. Then he vanished in a burst of rainbow brilliance and a silvery peal of sound, like music.

With the others at his heels, Glasser hurried around the corner of the house. His eyes ran along the wall and found the empty rectangle where the window had been. Then his glance went to the ground immediately below.

"Looks like the guy got up and ran away somewhere," one of the male nurses said.

"No, he didn't get up," Glasser said slowly. He swept a hand at the moist black earth beneath the window. "You'll notice there's no glass here, no marks in the ground, no flowers crushed—nothing to show that a man fell. We saw Delmar jump through the window—but he never came out on this side."

CRYSTALLINE POWER PLANT

★ By A. T. KEDZIE ★

IT IS NO NEWS that if you squeeze a crystal of quartz, you get electrical energy. Everybody who owns a phonograph knows that this is the commonest type of principle employed in the pick-up arm of the instrument.

The *piezo-electric* effect as it is called, stems from the work of Pierre Curie back in the eighteen eighties. It has since been employed in many things ranging from radio frequency controls to phonographs as mentioned.

But we're going to hear a lot more about quartz crystals. For one thing, these precious hunks of crystalline sand can finally be made in the laboratory—and the factory—in generous sizes and quantities. The scarcity of Brazilian quartz made this dis-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

covery imperative.

The marvel is of course, that this is done without a heavy rotating generator.

It has long been the aim of scientists to obtain usable amounts of electrical energy *directly* from heat or atomic power without going through the ponderous inefficient process of generating steam, turning a dynamo etc. The crystal generator appears to be a step in the right direction.

Very likely this is merely a clue to what is forth-coming. It promises to create a whole new range of equipments and apparatuses, as much smaller than electrical power outfits, as they are smaller than huge steam generators!

From such humble beginnings come great things. Hitch a variation of this gadget to an atomic generator and the possibilities are apparently limitless!

Along with this discovery has come the knowledge that a crystal of quartz can be designed into an apparatus which will directly generate usable quantities of electricity without the use of a conventional rotating generator!

Quart crystals mounted in a special cell, connected through a liquid medium to a piston which moves an exceedingly short distance, impelled by an exploding gas, give up electrical energy exactly like that afforded by simply squeezing the crystal. The exploding gases create a pressure which alternately presses against and relaxes from the mounted crystals. The result is that electric power in sizable quantities—maybe up to thirty-kilowatts can be obtained.

THE URANIAN EMISSARY

★ By MILTON MATTHEWS ★

FOR EVERY erg they sent me, I sent two back. For every erg they drained, I drained two. My pulse-beacon station was going to stay radiating on the untappable ultra-wave come hell—or Uranian warcraft.

They hovered just beyond bolt-range, two long slim needles, packed to the jets with lethal apparatus and they tried their damnedest to knock out my little thorn. They shot every weapon in the book at me, but the engineers who put down these lonely outposts knew what they were doing. To dig me out of my little dome was going to take more than two Uranian patrol craft. If they'd use a class-T ship on me, well—. But they didn't have ships to spare. The Martio-Terran fleet was doing nicely.

My job was to keep that untappable beacon-beam radiating its lancing self into space, serving as a guide-post for far-roving naval craft. The fact that I was on the Jovian moon, IX and fairly close to Uranian operational bases annoyed them, but unless they made a major effort—or I made a foolish mistake—I was going to sit this one out.

My meters spun, the cathode-ray traces danced on the tubes, and my relays clicked into action. To all outward intents, nothing was happening. In reality they were spraying me with plenty of kilowatts.

The disultory negative warfare—if it could be called that—kept up—pointlessly. But I knew enough not to underestimate any of that lethal Uranian brood. They were hellions.

About the seventh night after the initial attack, I'd just finished an ultra-contact with a Terran station—encouraging me and congratulating me, telling me that the war showed signs of ending with the blasting of eleven major Uranian bases—when I thought I caught a faint pulse of radiant energy as if something nearby was disturbing my shield.

Were they going to try a physical attack? The thought was preposterous! But just to check, I examined the detectors—and bango!—I nearly jumped out of my suit.

Crossing the ammonia-iced clearing toward my stahlo-aluminum, were three Uranians! They moved calmly and deliberately—they could afford to, thinking I'd be completely surprised. Silently I thanked the gods that I'd rigged the infra-red detector.

The body temperature of a Uranian is eight hundred degrees, and he actually glows, his crytalline chemistry using up energy at a terrific rate. I watched the three semi-human figures, massive and squatty move slowly toward my post, clouds of vaporized gases rising with each step.

I went to the Benton needle-gun, which throws a three hundred thousand kilowatt beam. Nonchalantly I sighted on them and then spoke into the phones.

The translator took care of my English for them. I don't know how the idioms went over, but they got the idea, pronto!

"Too bad, boys," I cracked, "But I've got you in my sights. Drop the projectors and stand still!"

Over the phones I caught their gasps of surprise.

"The Terran is aware!"

"Run! Thankar, Run!"

I touched the firing stud. The glowing figures, even as they started their clumsy run, vanished abruptly into a greater glow as the beam knifed through them. Vast clouds marked the spot briefly, where they'd made their abortive attempt.

I reset the screens and went to sleep. War could be so boring. But it never really was, for a short three hundred thousand kilos away still circled the besiegers....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well I'll Be Hexed!"

By Peter Phillips

"Cut down my trees and I'll magic you!" the gnome-like man threatened. But Bertram didn't believe in that sort of nonsense . . .

He stared over the top of his desk at the figure of the little man standing there. It was a sight he found hard to believe . . .

SHANEVILLE'S museum boasts the statue of an automobile wonderfully executed in stone, with every detail perfect. If the attendant tells you its origin, you don't believe him. He hardly believes it himself.

For the full story of how it commemorates twelve crowded, crazy hours in the life of the town you must go to Bertram Makepeace. He's a lawyer, a good respected citizen now. Once he was a heel. He admits, without a blush, that he was a heel. A smart one.

The fatter the fee, the smarter he was at verbally nibbling around statutes, undermining ordinances, obfuscating issues, goading D. A.'s into procedural indiscretions and, in general, dumping truckloads of spanners into the wheels of the Law and padding the pants of its dignitaries with burrs.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If an honest cent found its way into his pocket, it came in change. He'd foreclose on his grandmother.

Don't get this wrong: he was no villain. Just a plump, youngish guy with a fondness for living easy—until those twelve crowded, crazy hours which began one glorious morning in Fall.

He was sitting in his inner office, paring his nails, waiting for some law-crossed citizen to enlist his expert aid in some form of litigation. Any form. Bertram was versatile. Anything from murder to Patent Rights.

His thoughts revolved pleasantly around his most recently concluded case in which he'd proved to the satisfaction of a senile judge that Shaneville's vice monopolist Barron Morley was (a) not the owner of the battery of the one-armed bandits seized by the gendarmes; (b) had received no money from their operation even if he was the owner; (c) had contributed plenty to party funds from the profits anyway; (d) knew nothing about the anti-social use to which two properties of his on Beech Avenue were being put; (e) that the young man who'd been crazy enough to win too much in a basement crap game, thus bucking against both Fate and Barron Morley, had positively deserved to be strongarmed into insensibility and mulcted of the ill-earned cabbage.

Barron Morley was duly grateful to Bertram Makepeace for this presentation of his civic virtues. And Bertram, this keen bright morning in Fall, was musing on this gratitude and on the Eternal Verities. When—

In from the sun-washed main street, up the narrow outside stairs, through the outer office, disheeding the protests of the plumpsome blonde guardian, marched a little man. Straight into the inner office he clumped, to confront Makepeace with quivering forefinger and quavering irritated voice.

TO KEEP the record straight, the runt wasn't a leprechaun. Neither was he a clurichaune. He wasn't an efreet, a genie, gnome, troll, pigwidgeon, dwerger or nixie. He wasn't a sprite or a kelpie or an imp. He wasn't a hobgoblin, boggart, satyr, demon, queckle, will-o'-the-wisp, brownie, kobold, peri, a kern, a bogey or a flibbertigibbet.

He wasn't a—

Maybe it would be quicker to tell you what he was.

A Sherelbubekin. One of the Maine Sherelbubekins at that.

He said: "Lookit, worm—keep your pudding face out of my business in future or I'll hex you from here to Christmas." The voice was like a wet cork on glass.

Bertram was courtroom-trained never to let the unexpected faze him. He casually inspected the three-foot figure. It was dressed in mole-skin breeches, pea-green jacket and deerstalker cap. A smell of wild, wet woods, decaying leaves and pungent hunting-fire smoke diffused through the office, with a suspicion of corn whiskey and onions. The face, wrinkled as a long-stored apple, was dominated by the long, slightly bulbous nose of a practising lush.

"What circus you with?" asked the mundane lawyer.

"Circus?" he screeched. "Do I look like a carny exhibit?"

"Beg the court's leave not to answer that question...Are you a leprechaun then?"

Sheer fury stoppered the little man's larynx. Instead, he rose slowly a foot in the air, tiny fists clenched to his sides. Then he cut power, and his fifty pounds dropped back to the floor

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with a booty clunk.

"You fat, moronic, myopic scrivener! I'm a woodland Sherelbubekin. not a bog-wallowing fairy from Ireland. I'm as American as you are. I've lived in the woods around here for as long as there's been woods and I don't aim to be hedged outa my home by any slick city man like Barron Morley. That guy's fixing to build his blamed road-house right over my back door and felling my trees right and left."

"Oh-oh. I get it. Then it was you who whispered things in the D. A.'s ear?"

"And planted evidence. Sure did. Then you have to horn in and fiddle that fool judge round your fingers—so instead of giving Morley a stretch he blamed near gives him a gold medal!" The Sherelbubekin made as ferocious a face as his normally mild visage could manage. "Now listen—I figure to fix him again, and if you don't let the law run its course, I'll fix you up with a magic that'll make you wish yourself elsewhere."

Bertram Makepeace closed his eyes, opened them. Then he looked hopefully over his shoulder out of the window. The yellowed autumnal sunshine gleamed on the fittings of a soft-drinks bar over the way. Noon-day shoppers and businessmen intent on lunch passed down the street. A newsboy yelled. A truck lumbered.

Real enough.

He turned back. The Sherelbubekin was still there.

Real enough.

Bertram frowned. "Why pick on me, old-timer? It's just my job. Why not magic Morley?"

"Because he ain't a local boy, and I can't touch him. But you are. You must be, the calm way you're takin' this. You know there's magic in the woods. Anyways, I haven't magicked anyone for fifty years. Causes too much talk nowadays. All I want is to be let alone."

Even if this was a waking dream, Bertram thought, there was no reason why he shouldn't try to be rational.

"There's plenty of woodland," he suggested placatingly. "Why not move along a little and make room for Morley's roadhouse?"

The bulbous nose glowed more redly.

"I already told you—I've been there most all my life, and I'll be there a few hundred years yet. There's not another hollow tree and root-bower in the place I could make so comfortable. There's the principle of the thing too. Not that I figure you understand moral principles. You're too smooth. I don't like the way you operate even if you are a local boy. So keep out of my hair. When I fix Morley, you let him stay fixed. Or else."

The little man clumped off to the door.

"Hey! Before you go—do it again—the—" Bertram waved his hand upwards expressively. "The Indian rope trick."

"Pah! Kid stuff."

THE DOOR closed. Bertram waited a moment, rang for his plumpsome blonde. "Ethel," he asked slowly, "did someone just come through?"

"Yes, Mr. Makepeace. The same man that barged in five minutes back. Tried to stop him, but he waved me off. You didn't ring, so I thought it was O.K."

"Man?" Bertram had a strange suspicion. "How'd he look?"

"About five-eleven, hundred and eighty, middle-aged, distinguished. The whiskey-ad type. But surely you've just been talking with him haven't

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you?"

Bertram stroked his smooth chin. "Yes. Of course. Just testing your powers of observation."

On a hunch, he wandered down from his offices to the tobacco and candy kiosk which stood at ground level to one side of the stairs.

The youth in charge gave him a grin which was as good as a wink. "See someone? Yes, sir. She'd take a lot of missing, that dame. What a honey—brown hair, green frock, kinda tall. She stopped by and bought a tin of pipe tobacco—strongest I got. For her Pop, I guess?"

Bertram helped himself to a cgiar, spat the tip. "Supposing I told you she probably intended to smoke it herself? And that she wasn't a girl at all but a little man three feet high in jerkin and breeches?"

"You feeling well, Mr. Makepeace?"

"Fine," Bertram said. He returned upstairs. "As a private eye," his brazenly practical mind mused, "that little guy could make a fortune. Hypnotism maybe?" He shrugged.

And since he figured there was nothing in it for him, and it was easier to forget than to rationalize, he thrust the interview to the back of his resilient mind. For a while. Two days exactly. Until Lemuel Stuchs brought the news that Barron Morley was in the D.A.'s office and howling in vain for citizens' rights to phone his lawyer.

The D.A. had refused. He wanted to avoid the facile tongue and wily manoeuvres of Bertram Makepeace for as long as possible. He knew Bertram would be on the scene pretty fast anyway.

Not so fast as he might have been. Outside the D.A.'s office, Bertie was halted as he stepped from his car by a touch on his arm.

He looked at the face of a total stranger, a six-foot truck-driver. But the voice wasn't strange to him, pitched low to reach him alone.

"I warned you," said the Sherelbubekin. "If you act for Morley, I'll fetch this town around your ears."

Bertram recovered quickly, said: "It's my job. I can't let a client down. At least, I must see him. Listen—"

But the Sherelbubekin moved away to a pillar fronting the sidewalk, leaned against it negligently, lit a pipe.

Lemuel Stuchs tugged Bertram's sleeve as he started to follow. "Let's get in. You can date the dame later."

"What dame?" asked Bertram. Then he remembered the Sherelbubekin's ability of multiple disguise. "Oh—sure."

As he hurried Bertram into the office building, Stuchs looked at the waiting truck driver, from his boots and oil-grimed pants to his peak cap.

Stuchs whistled low. "You can pick 'em," he said appreciatively. "Why don't babies like that wait for me?"

"Probably because you're not a local boy."

A delightful picture prodded into Bertram's glum thoughts. He stopped. He said: "Look—Morley won't need you for a while. Why not make a play for the kid yourself if you like that type? Ease her off my hands. I'd count it a favor."

Stuchs' thin face became a satyr mask. "You lost her already." He turned back, headed for the truck-driver.

BARRON MORLEY had decided as a youth that it was better to be big in a small town than small in a city. The political overheads of off-color business were lower. Now he was thinking that more attention to political overheads might have paid off.

"This," said the D.A. to Makepeace

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grimly, "sticks. Two girls over the State line and a bale of Mary Anna. Photographs, signed testimony exhibits. He stays in custody until the preliminary. This time you'll get Judge Jenkins. If you step out of line, he'll throw the book and the Bar Association at you. So will I."

Makepeace ignored it. Morley yawned, prodded the lawyer's vest. "How long? I'm tired of talking."

Bertram looked at his watch. "Couple of hours. And quit talking. You don't know the right words."

The assistant D.A. stalked out of the door after him, chewing on a match. "Bail's opposed," he said. "And if you slap a writ, it'll bounce. This time he can cool off overnight at least."

"Not while I'm practising," Bertram called back as he strode into the sunshine.

Even if he'd been looking at his feet, he wouldn't have seen what tripped him. He sprawled, gasping.

The Sherelbubekin, still a truck-driver—to Bertram—helped him up. "What's the hurry. Figure you're going to spring him again?"

"Let go, willya. Save your fool gags for the kids at Hallowe'en. You spoiled my suit." He brushed vigorously.

The Sherelbubekin said nastily: "That ain't all I'll spoil, pudding-chops. I warned you to keep your nose out. The only reason I ain't fixed you already is I like your sense of humor, setting that underfed gorilla to date me up. Maybe you think that's funny"—and he pointed to the opposite side of the street.

Stuchs was doing an unwavering, rigid hand-stand in the middle of a gathering crowd. Someone pushed his heels, which swayed from the upright, came vertical again like a lead-bottomed figurine clown.

Bertram took a long snort of air. It was impossible not to believe in the Sherelbubekin's powers. At the same time, it was inexpedient to disbelieve in the more mundane but effective powers of Barron Morley—in or out of jail.

He tried reasoning. "If I don't play along with Morley, one of his mob will get me. I won't be the first in this town. Hell, see reason, can't you? Let me spring him now, and I'll see what I can do about getting the site of his roadhouse moved along, if that's all you want."

The Sherelbubekin scratched his truck-driver's chin thoughtfully. "If you'd really believed in me, you'd've done something about that before now. You need a lesson, Makepeace."

It was an impossible situation. In more than one way. A uniform loomed.

"What's the trouble lady?" asked the cop.

"She's no lady," Bertram snapped. "You need glasses."

To the policeman, the Sherelbubekin was not only a lady, she was a very personable and intriguing young lady—the image of his own dark-haired wife when she was young.

And this lady was complaining in the bitterest tones—which rendered themselves to Bertram as unintelligible squeaks—that Bertram had been making improper proposals to her and trying to act on them.

"No!" breathed the cop. "You must have it wrong, lady. This is a respectable citizen. He wouldn't—" The tips of his ears colored-up. "All right, lady, all right, don't go into details."

He looked around at the gathering of peekers. "Anyone else see it?"

"Most certainly did, young man!" An angle-faced woman, a model of outraged middle-aged maidenhood

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shoved forward, grasping an umbrella.

She might have walked out of a comic strip. She was too true to caricature to be quite true.

Bertram moaned. It seemed the Sherelbubekin had brought pals along.

"Never seen the like of it, officer," she squeaked. "Disgrace to the community having a beast like him loose. He came running straight at this young woman, nearly knocking her down. And what he did with his hands I blush to think of it, and if you don't arrest him—"

Bertram howled: "Just a minute. Look officer—can't you see she's no lady either? She's a—a—"

"No lady? Why, you hoodlum, I'll have you run out of town!" The squeak became a scream that stopped some of the traffic. "The Ladies Guild will hear of this. So will the Mayor. Do your duty officer—don't just stand there and let him insult a respectable woman like that."

BERTRAM grabbed the cop's lapel, muttered urgently: "It's a frame. You know who I am. You don't think I'd do anything like that?"

"I wouldn't know, Mr. Makepeace." The cop sounded doubtful. "Better let the lady swear a complaint to the sergeant anyway. The whole street's getting snarled up."

The crowd was pretty evenly split between the incredible balancing feat of Stuchs on one side of the street and the Makepeace party on the other. Stopped traffic formed a solid bridge between.

For a nightmare second, to Bertram's frantic eyes, the truckdriver (or young lady) Sherelbubekin and the middle-aged maiden Sherelbubekin assumed their proper grotesque proportions and hues. Two red-nosed little men who solemnly winked at each other and leered nastily at Bertram.

He lost his head. He shouted desperately: "Look now, you dumb damn cop! They're not women at all! They're little men! Use your eyes!"

"That," said the cop with finality, "does it. You been drinking, Makepeace. Or you ain't well. Come on."

"Don't be crazy. I've got to get to the judge."

"You'll do that fast enough."

A breath-stopping suspicion hit Bertram. He pointed a trembling finger. "You!" he shouted. "You're one too! You're a Sherelbubekin—you're a little man!"

Six feet of broad-shouldered cop bore down on him with grim and obvious intent.

From the corner of one eye, Bertram saw the original Sherelbubekin make a deft finger-pass, as a man might adjust the proportions of a pinch of snuff.

The cop grabbed Bertram's wrist. And stopped.

Just like that. Stopped as if he'd been frozen into immobility like a movie character in an interpolated still. And, frighteningly, in a majestic downfall, a stately sweep to the horizontal which might have excused a cry of "Timber!" plunked solidly, limbs agley, to the sidewalk.

Bertram skipped aside.

It might have been the fall of a stone statue except that the exposed portions of the policeman were expressive. His face and hands were still mobile. They'd apparently escaped the instantaneous ossification of his other parts. In fact, the face was voluble, the hands were clenched.

The face said, with unprintable ornamentation: "What's happened—who done this—I can't move—get a doctor—you, Makepeace—get me out!"

A new-hatched butterfly fighting to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

get out of its hard-shelled cocoon might have struggled in a similar manner. Tiny crackling sounds came from inside the stiff encasement of his uniform.

Two more cops shoved into view.

"Take him!" snarled the fallen one, twisting a finger to point at Bertram. "The indescribable zoological specimen just paralysed me." Or shorter words to the same effect.

Bertram, fox in a pack of prospective hounds, looked around for guidance. Everything had the clarity of a twilight dream.

The truck-driver giggled in the high-pitch of insanity: "Try this." And kicked the downfallen statue hard on the arm. The uniform sleeve shattered into granitic shreds halfway up to his arm. "You need a sledgehammer, not a doctor."

THEN THE truck-driver reverted to his original form again, for Bertram's benefit. So did the angel-faced witness. Two red-nosed little men. Said the truck-driver: "I warned you, Makepeace. When you get tired of bucking woodland magic, you know where to look for me—near the site where Morley ain't going to build his roadhouse. Right now, you can sort this out for yourself."

The grinning dwarfs dimmed, receded, disappeared. So did their feminine simulacra, to the gape-mouthed disbelief of the crowd and the two still-upright cops. A similiar scene in Salem two hundred years back would have called for wholesale cauterising in a pitch-and-faggots fire.

But magic takes a lot of assimilating in an incredulous age. The cops grabbed Bertram, who was within their sphere of comprehension.

In the scuffle, his hands contacted their clothing. And two more policemen, felled in their prime like forest giants, teetered, tottered, swayed and bit the sidewalk dust, squawking their helplessness even as the irrefragable paving cracked portions of the armour which their clothes had become.

The first cop got the idea quickly. He hammered the remains of his sleeve on the paving, cracking it off in clattering pieces.

"Get a hammer," he shouted. "Crack these pants! Lemme get up and get at that guy!"

And Bertram looked at his hands. Wonderful hands, now. His brain had sped from impossible cause to improbable effect even as the other two policemen were falling.

He found a second to wonder why his own clothing was unaffected, and deprecated the Sherelbubekin's apparently imperfect logic.

Some busybody ran up from Grainkin's hardware store with a three-pound hammer. With grunts of effort, he started cracking the first cop out of the lower part of his cocoon. He was spurred, no doubt, by the feelings of a citizen rather than by the opportunity to belt a cop with no come-back.

The cop cracked. A couple of welts on his knees freed his legs. He got up with difficulty, stepping out of a couple of short earthenware pipes that had been the bottom parts of his pants.

Bertram shook himself like a waking pup. His pudge-face exhibited various expressions. He made gargling noises. He thought he was saying: "This isn't happening. If it is, I don't believe it. I'm a respectable citizen, and this sort of thing doesn't happen to respectable citizens." So far does self-regard lead such folk, that Bertram didn't think of himself as a triple-layer heel.

Action. He reached a questing hand backwards for the door-handle of his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saloon. It wouldn't move. He moaned, said several things in a Latin that he'd mostly forgotten except for its legal and pejorative uses.

A man who spent his whole misspent life looking for modern parallelisms and equivalents of Dark-Ages alchemy and magic once said that the sphere of influence of intra-atomic locking forces and apparent transmutations, generated by thought-foci, is little more than nine feet...

And Sherelbubekins are bound by laws, too...

BERTRAM'S car became stone. From the rear stop-brake light to the intimidating Cyclop-search-light swept the Sherelbubekin magic. Through the inside mats, the windows, the body-work, into the metallic marvels of the straight-eight engine; creeping, freezing, solidifying, holding, tauntening, frosting glass, crystallizing metal, touching with fingers of quiescent command everything that was not organically alive.

Even if Bertram had been able to turn the stone-bound wards of the car-door lock, it's unlikely he could have moved the car from the congested spot. The spark-plug points, for instance, were within the nine-foot radius of ossification by contact which he was generating. And stone is largely non-conducting. (The car was later taken to the museum by truck).

The general idea that it would be wise to get Judge Jenkins to sign a writ of habeas corpus and spring Barron Morley was still ranging around Bertram's mind despite the multiple confusions. It was his duty as a lawyer. Anyway, derogation of duty might lead to ventilation of his own corpus by a number of holes .38 in diameter.

So he abandoned the car and plunged along the sidewalk towards the business residence of Judge Jenkins. The crowd split as clean as the parting on a thin-thatched head to give him passage, despite shouts from the incapacitated gendarmerie.

For a few awkward steps, the first cop, minus pants, stumbled after him, stone boots clattering. Then the boots splintered, a shard slid into a tender portion and the cop gave up the chase.

Makepeace carried overweight. He trimmed some of it in his sprint up the street. The doughy plumpness of his face was suffused with pumping blood, his cigar-tanned lungs wheezed with the effort.

He'd nearly reached the steps of the courtroom where Judge Jenkins was in session when a cop car whined into the sidewalk and decanted four of the burliest thick-necks in the force to bar his way.

Someone had done some smart telephoning. Following the car came the jalopy of Pip Jackson, picture man of the Shaneville Courier. He stood up on the back seat, held his camera in one hand, made motions with the other.

"Come on folks. Come up close. Get your faces in the picture."

Bertram looked round. He'd been followed at a safe distance by a portion of the crowd. Stragglers were panting up behind.

Chief Jensen, behind his men, said: "Don't cause any more trouble, Makepeace. Guess you need to see a doctor. Let's go quietly to the station, and we'll see what can be done for you."

"What charge?"

"If you want it that way—call it obstruction of the sidewalk. Local offense."

"I didn't invite rubbernecks. I didn't stop traffic. All I want to do is see Judge Jenkins, and then take a little trip into the woods to see

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a—a friend."

"Sure, sure. I know how you feel. You can do all that just as soon as we've had a little talk at headquarters. GET IN THIS CAR!"

Apart from rehearsed courtroom rages, Bertram Makepeace was a peaceful type. But his nerves were suffering from the dervish-jig of thoughts in his heated brain. He lunged aggressively, jabbed a finger in the region of Chief Jensen's third vest button.

Chief Jensen weighed 256 pounds when equipped to withstand autumn chills. They'll still show you the crack where he hit the paving outside the Shaneville courthouse.

"That," said Bertram, wagging an admonitory finger as if finishing a long argument, "means get the hell out of my way."

He swept the miracle finger in an arc like a gun. The four policemen hopped back.

"Do it again," yelled the photographer hopefully, cramming a fresh plate into his ancient camera. "Didn't get it."

BERTRAM marched up the courtroom steps. He paused, turned, brow furrowed. He spread his hands appealingly. He looked a little pathetic.

"Look, fellers, I don't want trouble. You know me. I know the law. I'm pretty near as much in the dark as you are about this business. Just let me alone for a couple of hours, and I'll straighten things out."

"Wassermarrer with you pretty flowers!" shouted a townsman safe at the back of the murmuring crowd. "Call yourselves cops! Get that maniac inside. What do we pay taxes for? Get the lead outa your pants!"

The cry was taken up with enthusiasm, spreading back and back until a fifty-yard section of the street became one roar of exhortation. The cops didn't bother to shout back that that's just what they were scared of—not getting lead out of their pants, but getting lead in them. But they advanced.

Bertram retreated. It was difficult to back-pedal up the steps. He managed it, waving his hands in keep-off gestures and trying to summon up words to present the very reasonable argument that the more the cops tried to arrest him, the more they'd have to arrest him for.

He groped backwards for the handle of the courtroom door, closed tight against the chill of near-winter.

And the handle, the lock, the door, the frame, became one with the facade of the building. Stone. Though possibly of better-quality stone than the building. Retreat was cut off. Stone doors don't open on stone hinges.

Bertram had a quick mental vision of his comfortable office half-a-mile away down-town. A haven. A refuge. A place for rest and meditation on his sins and how to wriggle out of their consequences. Sudden longing for its familiar walls overcame all other considerations.

But he gave the cops one last chance. "I warn you—"

They rushed.

They were still clattering down the steps in attitudes reminiscent of Javanese ballet postures when he dashed across the sidewalk, leaped over the rocking, writhing, fuming figure of Police Chief Jensen, dodged across the road unimpeded by a single hand, and sped down the alleyway alongside Chambrook's department store like a fox with hounds sniffing the rearmost hairs of his tail.

He emerged into the further street, glanced back. Only a few athletic

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

folk were following. The transfixed, cursing policemen on the courtroom steps were an almost irresistible attraction.

The Makepeace mind was intent now on a single objective. His homey office, a long-deep-draw at the bottle of scotch in the top left-hand corner of his desk... And above all, solitude. His brain worked clearly to that end.

A streetcar heading in the right direction stopped a few yards away. Bertram firmly clasped his dangerous hands on top of his pearly-green hat —which had surprisingly stayed put during all his exertions—and lumbered towards it.

Or lolopped. Or waddled. Or jerked. Or shimmied. His mode of progression was almost indescribable. Try running yourself with hands on head and only hips to balance the gait. A plump burlesque comic couldn't have been more suggestively grotesque.

He stumped aboard, grazing his outspread elbows. The open-mouthed driver said: "Wyncha get a hat-pin, bub, if you're that scared of losing it?"

BERTRAM firmed himself with a foot on the door as the driver used a raw clutch and jerked off. First of the pursuers just failed to make it, and the driver was too intrigued by Bertram's attitude to heed the shouts. Then the road claimed his attention.

"In the box, bub," he said.

"I can't. I'll—I'll mail it to the company."

"Stuck for a nickel? What's this—a bet? Or you just figured a new way to bum a ride?"

"Young man, there's plenty of room to sit," said a female voice behind. "I like to see where I get off."

"Ignoring the obvious observation, m'am," said Bertram, "I prefer to stand. Put me down at the corner of Acacia."

"Nickel." The driver held out an uncompromising palm.

Carefully, Bertram brought down one arm, pulled a coin from his pocket without touching any part of the bus, dropped it in the outstretched hand.

The driver growled: "What's this? Egyptian money?"

Evidently the immunity from ossification of immediate personal effects did not extend to such adscititious encumbrances as coinage.

"It's a rare relic. Worth at least ten dollars. Keep the change. Lemme off here."

Bertram jumped before the bus stopped, staggered, regained his balance, fled across the street and up the outside stairs to his office with the alacrity of a pursued jack-rabbit returning to its burrow.

He kicked hell out of the door until it was opened by one of his clerks. He put his hands in his pockets—it had just occurred to him they were as safe there as on his head—and stamped through to his inner office.

"Go home, Jackson. And you, Muffin. Take the rest of the day off. You stay here, Miss Throop."

Ethel Throop, the plumpsome blonde, blinked and fluttered to open the door of the Makepeace inner office.

"You well, Mr. Makepeace?"

She was really concerned. She had feelings about Bertram. And they weren't all maternal. She often thought he'd be a quite handsome young man if it weren't for his thinning hair and premature stomach.

She was convinced that Bertram's wife didn't understand him. Besides, Mrs. Makepeace was thin, and what Bertram really needed was someone

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cushiony like herself who fully shared his views about food and other aspects of comfortable living.

And now he'd asked her to stay on and sent the two clerks home. Maybe he was working up to a declaration of his passion at last... Quite a dreamer, Miss Throop.

Bertram slouched in his swivel chair. "I'm out," he said, "to everyone. Unplug my phone."

"Your wife's been calling."

"It goes for her too."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Makepeace." She nearly added: "That's fine."

"Get me a cigar from downstairs. And a sandwich. Then lock the outer door."

"Oh, *yes,* Mr. Makepeace."

"And don't sound so damn happy," he snarled. "I'm in a jam."

"Oh." That didn't sound so good... But maybe if she helped him, provided metaphorical softness to lay his troubled head...

When she came back, Bertram was trying to pull open a drawer with the toe of his shoe.

"Don't just look! Open it."

She laid down the cigar and sandwich, pulled the drawer open.

"Take it out. Put it on the desk."

SHE REGARDED the bottle doubtfully. "It's none of my business, Mr. Makepeace, but isn't it a little early? You once said it made you feel sleepy all day if you drank in the morning."

Bertram growled deep in his throat and kept his hands in his pockets with difficulty.

"The glass too—right—take out the cork—pour—and don't spill it!" he howled as the alarmed girl's not-so-steady hand slopped a little on the blotter. "That stuff ain't cheap rye. Now hold it for me to drink."

"W-what?"

"I hurt my hands. Can't hold anything."

Understanding and relief—somewhat misplaced—dawned on Ethel's pretty round face. Her full lips curved into a little moue of sympathy.

"Oh, you poor dear! Why didn't you tell me?"

"I'm telling you now. Don't tilt too fast."

Best Highland scotch dribbled over his one-and-a-half chins.

"I'm sorry. Here—this is the best way to do it." Ethel, alert opportunist, calmly seated herself on his ample lap, put one tender arm round his neck.

She had an impulse, fortunately resisted, to coo: "Um's a good ickle man. Dwink up oo's nice whisky, and it'll make oo big and stwong."

"Ulp. Sandwich."

She fed him sandwich.

"Cigar."

Apart from his legal activities, Bertram Makepeace was a very moral man. Thus far in life, he'd taken pleasures sadly and a little impatiently, except for the pleasures of sharp practice.

But the excitements and the brisk exercise of the past half-hour had begun to awake feelings in him that had lain dormant since his extreme youth, and a suspicion that there was more to life than the observation of social convention and the pursuit of business.

He realized, almost with a shock, that it was enjoyable to have Ethel Throop on his lap; and that it might be more enjoyable if he dared take his hands out of his pockets.

He'd never looked at her properly before. Now he did as she nipped the end of the cigar for him with small even teeth, delicately and without the slightest sign of disgust. Maisie hated cigars. Ethel was weightier maybe,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but what the heck... Her ankles were quite slender. Nice capable hands. Nice—

The phone ran. Ethel took it, still retaining her seat. "Mr. Makepeace's office... No, Mrs. Makepeace... He's... Well, no—that is—"

She clapped a hand over the phone, whispered urgently: "She's across the way. Says she saw your car with a crowd of people round it. Figures you must be here. I think she's coming up."

"No!" Bertie snatched. It was an uncontrollable reaction. He was fond of Maisie. But Maisie demanded explanations. And his immediate need was to make explanations to himself, not to others; to bring his winging thoughts down to earth, to grapple with the problems presented by the contrivings of an illogical Sherelbubekin, and the probable activities of a bunch of hard-faced gorillas in the employ of Barron Morley. They were small-town gorillas, but as dangerous as their city counterparts—especially if they'd filed their trigger-stops. If both Morley and Makepeace were in a jam, Makepeace might make his peace with the D.A. at the expense of Morley—or so the thoughts of Morley would run, with consequent lethal instructions to his gorillas.

It's understandable that when such considerations flitted through Bertram's mind just before he grabbed for the phone, they occluded more practical considerations, such as what would happen when he took his hand from its snug insulation in his personal clothing.

THE PHONE, of course, went dead. Ossified copper wire, ossified carbon granules, ossified plastic insulation: a stone phone won't moan. Or even squeak. The high voice of Bertram's wife was cut off. She was left to shrill unanswered queries and objurgations into the dead instrument in the drug store across the way.

Non-living organic or inorganic matter to a radius of nine feet... The swift alchemy didn't stop at Bertram's desk phone. It turned the desk into close-grained rock—not unlike basalt—together with papers, blotter, pen-holder, the quart of scotch (the precious liquid became a rather spongy version of volcanic pumice-stone), the carpet and Bertram's swivel chair, which thereafter refused to swivel—

—And the habiliments of Miss Ethel Throop.

Ethel froze, helpless. She wore a trim business suit, more suitable for the chilly season than an office frock.

Bertram found time, even in this extremity, to wonder whether she might have been able to break from her cocoon if she had been wearing lighter clothing... Her nylons crackled into tiny fragments as she shot out her legs in an automatic attempt to retain her balance.

Bertram caught her, lowered her to the stone floor with the breath-held care of a collector of Ming vases depositing a rare piece in its niche.

He said, with ludicrous inadequacy: "Sorry."

Ethel's larynx was temporarily paralysed. But her wide eyes were most eloquent.

"Don't worry. Nothing's wrong with you. Just your clothes. I'll explain later. Don't try to move. You'll cut yourself. The devil and back with all Sherelbubekins. Please—Miss Throop—Ethel, my dear—it's not my fault—"

Ethel found her voice. To hear Bertram using such endearments was almost worth the inexplicable breakage of her nylons, and her seeming paralysis—in that order...

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She had a swiftly adaptable nature.

Wriggling, she discovered she was still in possession of all her important faculties, and the attitude in which she lay was not unbecoming, although restricted.

She said—shades of all self-sacrificial, loving women through the ages—"I'm all right, I guess. But get me out of this."

"There's only one way," said Bertram. "And I can't... Supposing Mrs. Makepeace—"

Ethel flexed an arm made powerful by sterile years of stenography and typing. The sleeve of her suit cracked.

"Scared huh?" she said with mock scorn. "Anyone ever tell you that you were a heel?" She shattered the sleeve with a quick movement of her forearm.

A man wouldn't act in such a situation until he understood it. A woman will act first, analyse afterwards. The phone receiver had cracked from its useless wires, fallen to the floor. Ethel took it in her freed hand, began splintering her impeding skirt.

Bertram yammered as she hammered. He made fluttery imploring movements with his rather expressive hands, and alternated on his feet as if the floor had become hot.

"No, no, NO! Please don't—well, stay there—behind the desk—don't move—"

"Think I'm going to lie here in a fitted-to-measure mausoleum for the rest of my life?" She gasped with her efforts. A large hunk of skirt broke away.

Bertram averted his eyes. He heard a step in the outer office. He rushed out, slammed the door, leaned on it. His hair quiffed over his moist forehead. He tortured a smile onto his chubby face.

Maisie Makepeace did not return the smile. She was a pretty woman. She'd have been prettier, and maybe better-tempered, if there'd been a little more of her. The starchy and fatty diet she ate in a vain attempt to fill out did not make for mental poise. Neither did Bertram's constant bromide: "Thoroughbreds don't fatten."

Now she advanced with angular determination. "What," she asked grimly, "goes on here?"

"Nothing at all, honey—just a bit of a hitch in some business— I'll be pretty busy until it's cleared up—"

"So you sent your clerks home?"

"Uh—uh-huh—yeah."

"Then who was it answered the phone? That Ethel girl of yours wasn't it?"

"Don't come near me honey, please—can't explain in detail now, but I've been having trouble with a—a little man. I've been magicked. I know it sounds crazy, but you've gotta believe me. Please go home, and I'll ring you. Stay away from me!"

THAT WAS one way to make sure that Maisie approached as near as possible. Bertram quit waving her away, plunged his hands suddenly deep into his pockets.

"What have you got in your pockets?"

"Only my hands."

"Don't be a fool. Who's in your office? Someone's making banging sounds. Why can't we go in?"

Suspicion began to crystallize in Maisie's mind. Never before had Bertram given her reason to suspect infidelity. But the "Ethel girl" had answered the phone, and she'd sounded rather flustered...

Maisie strode forward, reached for the door-handle. Makepeace interposed himself. "You can't—"

"So she *is* in there—that fat crea-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ture! Out of my way!"

With surprising strength she pushed Bertram aside, flung open the door.

"Who are you calling fat?" Ethel, flushed with her struggle, stood upright by the desk. "You—beanpole!" She had some skirt left. Enough for respectability on a beach.

Bertram watched Maisie's widening eyes, and her mouth, gaping to issue a flood of denunciation, horror, scorn and more-or-less-ladylike invective.

And something—maybe one of the bonds of complete sanity—parted in his brain.

"This," he observed, before Maisie could speak, "is the corniest goddam situation." His voice was loud, assertive and curiously cheerful. "Veddy, veddy corny. And I won't argue on the unholy demerits of circumstantial evidence. You wouldn't understand." He whistled shrilly. "Bang, bang, bang, the boys are marching," he sang—

And he was marching backwards toward the outer door. Explanations were obviously impossible at the moment. And it was SO corny that it was almost embarrassing on that score alone: stern wife, plumpsome secretary in state of deshabille, other clerks sent home—French farcical—comic strip—burlesque sketch—altogether beyond handling—

"There's a griffon sitting on your doorstep!" he shouted.

If sense wouldn't make sense to two infuriated women, nonsense could hardly make less...

In a few seconds, Bertram Makepeace had sloughed off ten years development as a responsible, hard-working, hard-grafting citizen and reverted to carefree collegiate days. If something is too awkward to handle, laugh at it. And run.

He was ready to run.

He reached out a hand, and remembered in time to thrust it into his jacket pocket and fumble with the knob through the cloth.

Maisie recovered from paralysis. "Where are you going, Bertram Makepeace?"

"Home." He bounded down the stairs.

Gloves might be the answer to his problem, he thought. But no. Nothing that he wasn't wearing when the Sherelbubekin made his pass was immune...

Home. And more scotch. But why wait until he got home?

Bertram paused in his half-running lope down the street. No one was following him yet. The police would be chary for a while, until a warrant had been sworn and they'd doped out a method of executing it—

"Taking exercise, Mr. Makepeace?"

Bertram nodded to an acquaintance. "Sure. Fine weather. Quite a chill to the air, though. Must keep moving."

He looked back again. Still no sign of Maisie. She was probably slanging it out with Ethel. Fine girl, Ethel. Wonder he hadn't noticed her before .... But heck, this was no time to be thinking of such things.

Wasn't it, though? Take what comes, Bertram, take what comes as it comes. Particularly scotch. The slug he'd had in the office was coursing merrily through his veins.

Bertram wasn't a heavy drinker. But now if ever, continued his thoughts, was the time to start.

HE MADE up his mind. He turned aside into Mel Boot's bar. He'd gotten Mel out of a jam recently. Mel should be grateful.

Mel was, after Bertram had explained that his hands were hurt.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Ya mean ya cain't use 'em atall?" Mel shook his blond bullet-head sorrowfully. "Poison ivy's just hell, I know. Here—don't mind the drunk."

The drunk was the only other customer at the time. He swayed on his stool, watched with blear-eyed, growing interest as Mel poured a glass of best scotch and held it up for Bertie to sup.

"You mush be in a bad way, Boy," he slurred. "Lookit—I been on it a week now, 'n' I can shtill hold my own glass." He demonstrated his ability proudly, without slopping more than half the contents.

Bertram sighed content. "You're a good feller, Mel. Any time I can fix anything—"

"Sure, sure. Have some more."

Bertram opened his mouth, gulped. He swayed a little.

Keen, autumnal air and raw whiskey on a near-empty stomach make a heady mixture.

The mini-radio on the bar stopped making music. The disc jockey said: "Just a moment, folks. Police message through courtesy of Station BRWX." Shaneville didn't boast any two-way cop radio. The local broadcasting station was always ready to oblige. Too damned obliging, thought Bertram a moment later.

"...Will patrolmen or any citizen who may see him please request Mr. Bertram Makepeace of 110 Acacia to report to police H. Q. Description. age 33, five-ten, 200 pounds, brown hair, balding on top..."

"The hell," interrupted Bertram. "Never been over 194 pounds."

"But that's you."

"That's me."

"What you do? What they want you for?"

"Just knocked a few cops down," said Bertram airily.

Mel blinked on top of a spreading grin. "You did, uh? In that case, have another drink." The fascination of pouring whiskey down the lawyer's receptive gullet was beginning to grow on him.

"And listen, Mel, I'm through running. Seems I been running all morning. I'll stay right here so they can find me. Meant to go home. Now I don't wanna go home. Haven't felt so good in years." He thumped himself on the chest. He looked at his hand, "You," he told it, "get right back in your pocket." The hand obeyed.

The drunk, with that strange alchemy of overheated blood that seems to draw one drunk to another, stumbled off his stool, staggered over. "That's the stuff. You don' wanna go home. Nor me neither. Sick of the place. Lesh make a night of it. You gotta wife too?" He clasped a loving arm around Bertram's shoulders.

"Go 'way."

"Thass no way to talk to a pal," reproved the drunk.

"If you don't, I'll paralyse you."

"You will, huh? You will? Listen, bub, I been tryin' to get paralyshed for a week. Now you shay you c'n do it. G'wan—do it then."

"Stand there—right in the middle of the floor."

The drunk, owl-eyed, wobbled back with rubbery knees to the middle of the floor.

Bertram used his finger.

"SAY—THAT'S smart," Mel said, looking admiringly at the feebly kicking, recumbent drunk. "What is it—hypnotism?"

Bertram waved his finger. He tried to restrain the tendency of his eyes to form double images. "Nup. It's like this. There are some little men

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who live out in the woods way back, and a coupla days ago—"

He didn't get far with his anecdote. A man appeared in the doorway. With no polite conversational opening, he said: "The boss wants out. He don't like waiting. He says to tell you if he ain't sprung legal inside the next hour, he'll bust out, and you can have the headache."

"Are you," asked Bertram with tremendous dignity, "addressing me?" He recognized Ham Danno, a gorilla of Neanderthal cast of face. "How'd you find me anyway?"

"Useta be a boy scout. I just followed your tracks. Now do you come and spring the boss or do I take you? Lem Stuchs would like to see you too."

"Lots of people would like to see me. I'm here. Let 'em all come."

Ham Danno looked back over his shoulder, then with the secretive air of someone producing a risque postcard for the boys at a mixed party, drew a heavy automatic from a shoulder holster.

"This is a small town," he said, "and these things make a big noise. So I don't wanna have to use it. But if you don't walk... Get in that grey car out there. Move."

Bertram smiled sweetly. "Not such a small town if you haven't heard the good news. You haven't? Well, have a drink on it. No hurry. Set one up, Mel."

"You nuts?" asked Danno.

"Quite. Anyway, have a drink. And Mel—stand back, pal, right back at the other end of the bar—that's right. There's your drink, Mr. Danno—it is Mr. Danno, isn't it? —drink up. Then I'll come quietly."

Almost automatically, Danno's left hand reached for the free drink. Bertram slapped the counter. Danno was well within the nine-foot range. Even his stub Luger turned to stone.

Bertram paused in the doorway. "You always wanted a marble top to your counter, Mel. Now you got something better than marble. You can use that yegg as a lamp-holder. He's in the right attitude."

He walked over to the grey car, followed by the faint cries of the drunk and the lustier shouts of the enswaddled Danno.

The driver thrust out his head. "Where's Ham?"

"Thirsty. He says take me to Morley right away."

"What's the shouting about?"

"Just a couple of drunks bawling it out."

SO EASY. Much easier than arguing a case. Maybe, thought Bertram as he settled back in the car—the driver had opened the door for him—he'd done too much arguing in his life.

Words. Long words, foreign words, confusing words, words to sway juries and make judges docile. A plain lie was better than high-flown perjury. And action was better than either. And more fun.

Whiskey-logic.

"So Morley wants out?"

The driver grunted: "You should know."

"I don't have a habeas corpus, but I'll get him out."

"The D.A.'s turned him over to the cops," said the driver. "he's at headquarters now signing on for jail."

"Procedural indiscretion. Should have been granted overnight bail until first hearing. But do I care? Your beloved boss wants out. I'll fetch him without formalities, send him home to his sorrowing family."

"Slapping down cops right and left,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I suppose?" the driver sneered. "Who're you—Superman?"

"News surely does travel slow in this town," said Bertram. "Hie me thither, Jehu, and stand well back. Incidentally, they're after me too. Cops—I love 'em. They wear such thick uniforms."

He began to sing.

He was still singing when he confronted the desk-sergeant.

"Mr. Makepeace—I'm glad to see you. Feeling better now?" The sergeant sidled warily round his desk.

"Never been sick. Wanna see my client." Bertram beamed happily.

"He's next door and not available at the moment."

"In the jail-house?"

"That's right." The sergeant was excessively polite. "Would you in the meantime please accept service of this document—just a warrant for your arrest—you'll wish to check it I suppose? Then you may see Mr. Morley. From the adjoining cell."

"Harvard? How you boys drift into the gendarmerie nowadays."

"No. Cambridge, the Sorbonne and McGill. I studied law too, Makepeace. But I decided I'd rather enforce it."

"I suspect a crack. But I'm rather obtuse today. You want me to read this?" Bertram took the paper. It crackled like thin glass between his fingers. Shards tinkled to the floor.

"Inoperative," he said.

"I am laughing my damned head off," observed the police sergeant morosely. "Why not save those gags up for the police party at Christmas? We always invite the prisoners."

From the door, police chief Jensen heaved a heavy sigh and made an appearance, keeping his eyes on the plump lawyer as if he expected Bertram to make a flying leap at him.

"Warned you," he told the sergeant. And to Bertram: "Go straight through, Mr. Makepeace. Your client is in the second cell on the left."

"Nice of you, chiefey. See you've a new uniform on. No hard feelings?"

"None at all." The chief strained a smile onto his red face. "We can discuss the little matter of your arrest later."

As Bertram marched merrily through the connecting passage to the jail building, the chief whirled on a cop. "Get round the block quick," he ordered fiercely, in an undertone. "Lock the grille door at back of the jail. Move." The cop ran.

Chief Jensen took up the phone. "Judge Jenkins? He's here. You okay for that special afternoon session? Right. We'll have him along in ten minutes or so. Thanks."

He slammed the phone down, wiped his brow.

The sergeant shook his head. "How will you hold him?"

"I'll show you," Jensen said grimly. "Get me Peters and Mackensen."

HE FACED the two cops, stroked his chin. "You boys are due for promotion. That right? You wouldn't want to miss out, would you?"

They shook their heads in unison.

"Right. Here's where you earn it. Strip."

"Uh?"

"Wassat?"

"You heard. Get out of your clothes quick."

Peters, a beefy blond, widened his eyes. "In front of everybody? Hey—"

"I guess we can stand it," Jensen snarled. "Might be hard on our nerves, but we'll recover. I haven't time to explain. Take 'em off."

"Everything?" asked Mackensen.

"Yeh. Quick."

"I don't like to," said Mackensen.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not even for promotion."

"Holy Hecuba! You'd think I was asking you guys to do a strip-tease in front of women. There's only me and the sergeant here. I ain't noticed either of you being bashful when you take a shower in the locker-room. There's a feller coming through that door in a minute. I want you to arrest him. And hold him."

"Do we got to be mother-naked to arrest a guy?"

"Have you heard what happened to me this morning?"

Peters sniggered incautiously.

"I see you have," said Jensen, controlling his voice with an effort. "Well, that wouldn't have happened if I'd been naked, would it?"

"If you'd been naked on Main Street, chief, there's lots of things would have happened."

Jensen gave up. He advanced menacingly. "If you ain't out of those duds in thirty seconds flat, I'll strip you with my own hands."

"Hell, chief, it's cold," stalled Peters.

"You'll get plenty exercise in a minute."

Mackensen paused in his unbuttoning. "Say, chief—can't we just keep our drawers on?"

Jensen considered. "O.K. then. Just your underpants."

A moment later he groaned, hid his face in his hands. "What have I done to deserve this?"

"Well, they're pants, ain't they?" Mackensen muttered defensively, hitching up a pair of mauve-and-green horrors. "Besides, my wife bought 'em."

"Then why doesn't she wear them?" Jensen moaned. "You've shaken my faith in the entire police force. You got me wondering how many of my officers wear things like that under their uniforms."

"How should I know?"

"I'll treat that as a rhetorical question," Jensen sighed. "Get over by that door. When this guy Makepeace comes out, jump him. And hold him."

BERTRAM was swaying happily in front of a cell, trying to bring Barron Morley into single focus between the bars.

Barron Morley wasn't so happy. "Listen, you fat slob, it's four hours gone since I told you to get that writ. What you been doing since? Pickling your goddam tonsils. Maybe shooting off your mouth too, huh? Know what we used to do with mouthpieces in the city when they talked out of turn?"

"No. You have a five-o'clock shadow," Bertram observed, swaying nearer. "Wanna borrow my razor?"

"Now he makes cracks!" Morley growled. "My own fault trusting a hick lawyer. I shoulda got someone from the city."

Bertram wagged a plump forefinger. "That's not kind. This IS a city. Nearly ten thousand pop., last census. And I love it."

He drew himself up with the ineffable dignity of the drunk. "It's my home. No one asked you to come here. No one asked you to hire me. I came here to set you loose, and what thanks do I get? None. Just vulgar dia-diatribes 'gainst the place I love." A fat maudlin tear formed in his right eye. "You should see the woods in Fall—all glowing red and brown and green —and—green and red—"

His round face was invitingly near. Morley reached between the bars, grabbed his collar, hauled him close, snarled into his face: "You get me outa here quick, or I'll get the boys to—"

He didn't say what he'd get the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boys to do. His mouth kept on moving, but no sounds issued. Bertram had instinctively tried to pull the hand away—and touched Morley's sleeve.

Morley fell backwards stiffly with a clunk that shook the cell.

"There," said Bertram self-righteously. "All your own fault. You c'n stay in jail now, just for saying nasty things about our town—our city. If you don't like it, why don't you go back where you belong?"

Bertram did some heart-searching. "I may not be a good lawyer," he said reflectively, "but I'm not altogether a dirty one. I've done some sharp things in my time. But they didn't include running drugs and women." His moon-face beamed as if he'd just solved a difficult problem in law. "I don't like you, Morley. That's it—I don't like you. Maybe it's best you stay in jail. Think I'll tell the judge jus' what I know about you, and it's plenty."

Barron Morley found a little of his voice. Enough to croak: "Wait'll I get outa this, Makepeace. You'll die slow. You'll die slower still if you open your fat mouth." He went into details.

The details were distressing. Bertram didn't want to be distressed. He retreated down the corridor towards the police office.

His thoughts ran on a drink and congenial company, maybe a bite to eat, though he didn't feel very hungry, then a nice chat with the D.A.... And an interview with a Sherelbubekin.

Two shivering, near-naked policemen interrupted his reverie.

BOTH PETERS and Mackensen felt the need to work off some emotion that was quivering inside their freezing hides. Neither was quite sure what the emotion was. They didn't stop to analyse.

They landed atop Bertram as he emerged from the passage, set to work with enthusiasm to arrest him. They might even have wanted to arrest his living processes altogether.

Unconsciously, Bertram applied the principles of Judo. Shocked—and drunk—he relaxed completely instead of resisting. The noggins of Peters and Mackensen cracked together.

Bertram crawled from under the temporarily-stunned heap of flesh. His brain went into high gear, from near-maudlinity to high conviviality. He leapt ponderously but accurately onto the desk, posed, giggled. "I'm the king of the castle. Let's all play pig."

One of the stunned cops—it was Mackensen—staggered towards him.

Chief Jensen had retired to safety behind the half-shut door to his inner office. "Go get him!" he shouted. "What in hell are you two waiting for?"

Mackensen stopped, looked at the police chief coldly. "I'm not sure," he stated, "just who I dislike most—you or this fat guy. Not that you're a shadow yourself. If you figure you can do this better, strip off yourself."

Jensen swallowed his choler, kept silent. He realised suddenly that a full account of this episode in the Courier might detract somewhat from the dignity of the force. And his dignity. And both Mackensen and Peters would know that...

Mackensen hitched his lurid pants. Bertram had time to take in the spectacle. He goggled with fascination at the cop's gorilla-haired chest. And the contrasting pants.

"What you laughing at?" Mackensen snarled, feeling sensitive as well as cold.

"You don't know what you're missing without a mirror," Bertram gig-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gled.

"C'mere!" Mackensen leapt, sprawled over the desk, grabbing vainly for the plump lawyer's ankles. Peters tottered up in support.

Bertram was never sure how he managed it. With a spry leap he bounded from the desk onto another eminence—a tall steel filing cabinet.

"Treed by famished wolves!" he exclaimed dramatically. "God, has no one here got a camera? An honest citizen, fully clothed, being chased by two naked coppers in the station house. Oh for an audience!"

He got one.

The street door had been closed but not locked. The cop on duty outside had no chance against Maisie Makepeace. The door flew wide open and she marched in, accompanied by Ethel swathed in a blanket.

"This young woman—" she began stridently. Then the scene registered.

The thoughts that sped through the mind of Maisie Makepeace between the time she beheld her husband treed on a filing cabinet by two underclothed gendarmes, and time she opened her mouth to scream, must unfortunately remain untold.

Chief Jensen howled: "Get those women out of here!"

Maisie decided not to scream. "What are you doing with my husband?" she demanded.

"Not a thing, lady. We just want to arrest him. If you have any influence with him at all—"—Jensen emerged cautiously from his office—"maybe you'd be kind enough to persuade him to give himself up."

"Like heck," interrupted Bertram. "Beginning to enjoy myself for the first time in twenty years."

"Please chief," pleaded Mackensen plaintively, "can me and Peters put some clothes on now there are some ladies here?"

ETHEL ADDED her voice. "Mr. Makepeace," she called, huddled in her blanket. "Don't blame me. Mrs. Makepeace made me come here. I know it wasn't your fault."

"What wasn't whose fault?" asked Jensen.

"My husband assaulted this young woman—his secretary—in his office—"

"I'm not surprised—"

"Listen, chief," said Peters firmly. "We're cold. And we do have some modesty. We don't feel good standing around like this—"

"Well, grab that guy. Are you paralysed? Here's another charge against him—assaulting this young lady."

"I didn't mind much, except my nylons got broken," said Ethel demurely, beseeching Bertram with her eyes to look at her and believe her. Her blanket wasn't all-enveloping. Bertram looked and approved. How had he managed to overlook her all this time...

"Sure honey," he called. "Howsabout having dinner with me tonight?"

The voices and the tumult grew.

Police chief Jensen thumped despairingly on the desk. His red face was turning purple. "Shut up everybody! I'm going mad!"

"She's going to swear a complaint against my husband if I have to choke it out of her—"

"I'm cold."

"Me too."

"Shut that goddam door. The whole of Shaneville's looking in," Jensen bawled, ignoring the cops.

The sergeant, who had received a classical education—always a prop in times of stress—sat down and began declaiming in a powerful bass above the cross-fire of voices:

"Rumoresque senum severiorum

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Omnes unius aestimemus assis—"

"SHADDAP!" Jensen's vocal chords nearly snapped.

"But the rest of it is very applicable," the sergeant shouted. "Beautiful stuff, old Catullus—"

Peters, catching the insanity, ruffed up his hair, struck a pose. "Would anyone like me to sing—"

Perhaps it's as well for the record that Bertram Makepeace missed his footing on the top of the narrow cabinet at that zany moment. He fell squarely on Mackensen, who was crouching modestly out of view of the two women.

This time he was held. He gave in gracefully.

Jensen breathed great, gusty relief. "Get him over to the court-house. And don't let him touch anybody or anything."

"Like this?"

"Like what?"

"We can't take him into court like this. Like we are, I mean." Mackensen was becoming increasingly self-conscious about his colorful underpants.

Ethel said: "You look all right, copper."

Mrs. Makepeace sniffed. "You would say something like that. Men—in pants or out of them. That's you."

"What," asked Ethel frigidly, drawing her blanket with dignity, "do you mean?"

"I'd hate to go into the matter here. It's obvious that there's an understanding between you and my husband."

"How I wish you were right," said Ethel sweetly. "He needs somewhere soft to lay his head. You'd give him contusions."

"Ladies," interrupted Jensen, thrusting his head between the women from behind, "we are going to the courthouse. NOW. There's a car outside."

"And I hope," said Mackensen miserably, glancing at the rapidly-gathered crowd outside, through which Bertram would have to be marched, "I hope the judge gives him twenty years. He's broken my back."

"I didn't ask you to break my fall," pointed out Bertram reasonably.

"And," added Mackensen, "if he lets you off, I'll break your neck."

Mrs. Makepeace said: "You certainly need a lesson, Bertie Makepeace, even if it means more scandal. Anyway, I'm tired of this town. I don't care if we have to leave it."

Bertram, still in his mood of civism, said belligerently: "Well, I do. I love this place."

Ethel stage-whispered: "I'll stand by you, Mr. Makepeace."

And Jensen, with a note of hysteria, howled: "MARCH! The whole blamed boiling of you. At least, get the hell away from this headquarters."

Pip Jackson of the Shaneville Courier got a perfect shot of the party descending the steps. The combination of Mackensen's lurid pants and the delicate blue tinge assumed by both cops on contact with the autumnal breeze sweeping down from the woods above the town would have made a good color picture.

"IF," SAID Judge Jenkins grimly, ten minutes after the hearing had begun, "these charges go before a jury, and you get the minimum on each, it should come to around ten years."

He spoke with eyes carefully averted from the scene in the well of the court. "And of course, a copy of these proceedings must be submitted to the Bar Association immediately. I cannot pretend that I will feel any sense of personal loss when you cease

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

practise in this town, Mr. Makepeace—"

He was interrupted by an usher who whispered in his ear.

"Recess five minutes," he snapped, and disappeared into his chambers.

When he reappeared, he leaned over his desk, stroked his prideful large white mustache, and beamed inanely at the group.

He laughed.

"What a bunch! Not seen anything so damn funny since the Mayor fell in the sewage. Where'd you get those pants, officer? They're beautiful. Let me know when they pup."

"He's gone nuts," whispered Jensen urgently to no one in particular.

"Ah—what was I saying before the recess? Oh yes—I think we all owe a vote of thanks to Mr. Makepeace for introducing this note of gaiety into the life of Shaneville. But before I formally dismiss these trivial and technical charges against him—"

"What!"

"Don't interrupt, Jensen. I am about to ask Mr. Makepeace to give a few items of information to the court which will be of interest both to you and the District Attorney, concerning the activities of Mr. Barron Morley. In thus giving States Evidence Makepeace will earn the protection of this court and the further thanks of Shaneville's citizens for helping to rid the town of a parasitic menace. Speak up, Bertram my boy."

Jensen spluttered: "This is most irregular, your honor—"

The judge pointed his gavel sternly. "It was also irregular, George Jensen, the way you shot that sitting bird in the woods last weekend. I didn't like it. Give woodland creatures a sporting chance, Jensen."

Police Chief Jensen did something he hadn't done for forty years, since he was caught sneaking cookies. He blushed. His mouth dropped open. He said weakly: "How in hell did you know—?"

Bertram had been looking hard at the judge. He began to laugh.

The judge winked. "Speak up, Bertram. The court stenographer will take a full note."

Bertram spoke up, and the stenographer began to scribble.

Lem Stuchs' disguise wasn't so hot. Just a beard. He slipped in back of the court, took careful finger-aim through his overcoat pocket. The judge saw him first.

The judge took aim too, with his gavel. Good aim.

Lem Stuchs felt cold paralysis freeze his every muscle. He couldn't even move his jaws to holler.

"At the back of the court," announced the judge clamly, "is Exhibit A—an employee of Barron Morley, put into a state of complete stasis at the critical moment of an attempt to murder Mr. Makepeace. Court ushers will bring the exhibit forward to be entered in the records before he is restored to motion."

"I," muttered Jensen, "have seen everything. Wake me up at seven a.m., mother dear, for I'm to be queen of the fairies."

"Although they are minus their badges and damned near everything else," said the judge, "I hereby empower these two policemen to arrest this gentleman and deprive him of his gun. Now!"

HE LEANED over and rapped his gavel smartly on Stuchs' head. Lem resumed activity, blink-eyed and bewildered. He showed a tendency to leave the scene—probably either to visit a saloon or a psychiatrist—but was restrained by four brawny naked arms.

Bertram finished his recital of the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

misdeeds of Barron Morley with relish.

Chief Jensen sat down and buried his head in his hands.

"—and I throw myself on the mercy of the court," ended Bertram cheerfully.

"That's fine," said the judge. "You leave this court without a stain on your character."

"Good for you," said Ethel.

"But what about this charge?" demanded Mrs. Makepeace heatedly, pointing to Ethel.

"Madam—you wouldn't wish to be vindictive with your husband?"

Maisie Makepeace looked doubtfully at her husband. He looked absurdly like a not-too-penitent schoolboy. Her eyes softened a little. "No... Well, that is—"

"I'm sure he'll be able to explain everything to your satisfaction later. Meantime—do I smell fire?"

"I smell kerosene," said Bertram softly. For the past few moments he had been following with wondering eyes the activity of a red-nosed Sherelbubekin—obviously invisible to the others—who was gaily slopping kerosene around the court from a ten-gallon drum.

The judge beckoned. He leaned down to Bertram's ear, whispered: "Meet me out back as soon as you've fixed it."

"Fixed what?"

"The fire, you dope. Don't you want to be a hero? You've still got the stone touch. Use it—for the last time."

And for a few seconds, the judge reverted to Sherelbubekin form. Bertram grinned.

The Sherelbubekin snapped back into the simulacrum of the judge.

"Definitely," he said. "Fire!"

The other Sherelbubekin tossed a match into the kerosene trail.

It was a most effective fire.

Gushes of flame cut off both exits from the court-room. Seats, wood-panelling, wood-block floor began to blaze.

Jensen bawled: "Hell! We're trapped."

The women screamed.

"Stay right where you are, folks," Bertram shouted above the din. He floundered round the big, smoke-filled room, laying-on hands at every step. The fire retreated before him.

Stone won't burn.

"Hey—good for you, Makepeace," coughed Jensen.

"I could make a fortune fire-proofing houses," Bertram spluttered.

Then as the last flame flickered out, he dashed through the smoke for the back exit. The "judge" had already disappeared.

He was waiting by the sidewalk at back of the courthouse in an ancient open automobile that looked as if it had been standing in the open air for twenty years.

"Things," panted Bertram as he scrambled in, "move fast when you're around."

The Sherelbubekin chuckled and drove off. Despite its age, the jalopy could travel.

"For a backwoods feller, you can certainly handle the wheel," Bertram muttered as the vehicle swayed and screeched round a corner.

"Up to date—that's me," said the Sherelbubekin proudly.

"What's happened to the real judge?"

"Hog-tied and gagged in his room. I sent in word I was the Governor. You shoulda seen that old crab-apple's face when the 'Governor' jumped him... Abner gave me a hand. He's a 'bubekin who lives the other side of the woods. I owe him a pint of corn for helping me out... Have a drink?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bertram took the corn. His throat pulsed to liquid gurgling.

"Not bad," said the dwarf admiringly. "Sure can tell you're a local boy. I brew that stuff myself. It'll take the bark off trees."

"Where are we going?"

"The woods. Was powerful magic I shoved into you. Needs takin' off on my home ground."

"But—oh, heck, there's so many questions. And I don't feel like asking 'em."

"Simple. I changed my mind about you when I heard you tellin' that city feller to stew in jail. I was standing right behind you. And anyone who loves the woods like you—well, he can't be so bad. You've paid off for horning in on my business. Now maybe I owe you a favor."

"The woods," Bertram murmured. "Sure."

HE BREATHED deep. The jalopy was just entering a rising road between the tall pines. Soft autumn scents filled the evening air. The keen wind of the day had dropped. A red, setting sun touched the black sentinel trees with rosy fingers, sent long slanting shafts of warm light into the olive-green undergrowth.

The road widened out. Trees and bushes had been mercilessly hacked down to make room for the foundations of a building.

"Barron Morley's roadhouse—that he ain't going to build—now," said the Sherelbubekin with satisfaction. "See how near it was to my place."

He stopped the car in a natural glade at the foot of a towering fir which was oddly at variance with the surrounding trees. Its great, centuries-old roots curved out, bare, where snow and rain had eroded the earth.

"Guess you're a little oversize to come inside. Stay here. I'll be back in a short time."

The Sherelbubekin disappeared amid the roots. Bertram saw a gleam of light.

He got out of the car, sat on the footboard. The forest silently awaited the night. He realised that he felt at peace for the first time, not merely in hours—but in years.

"From now on," he said softly to the trees, "I'll stick to civil law cases. Honest ones. Well—not too crooked, that is. Gotta make a living. But I shan't work too hard. Playing's important too."

He sat quietly for a while, looking up.

"Like a church, ain't it?" said the Sherelbubekin, coming softly to his side. "You're O.K. now. You're unfixed."

Bertram looked at the red-nosed little man. "Uh-huh. Better go home, I suppose." He sighed. He was thinking of his wife.

"Quit worrying. No one will ask too many questions about what's been happening. Folks like to forget what ain't easy to believe. And your wife—"

"Yeh—my wife. That's my main worry."

"Short-tempered, ain't she?" murmured the Sherelbubekin sympathetically. "That's because she's underweight. Lookit—I said I owe you a favor. Got a picture of her on you?"

Bertram handed him a wallet photo, puzzled.

"Fine," said the Sherelbubekin. "You know—sympathetic magic doesn't have to be bad magic."

He muttered things at the photograph, made a twisty motion with a finger. There were lines of strain on his old, wise little face. He handed back the photo. "That should do it. It's about bust me clean out of magic for months ahead."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What have you done?"

"You'll see. Now better git. I'm for a hot whisky and a long sleep—maybe till Spring. If you're around next year—drop by."

"I will," said Bertram, and meant it.

He turned once to wave as he set off down the road out of the forest.

A little figure, silhouetted black against a fading patch of sky, waved back.

BERTRAM kept to the shadows in his walk through town. He let himself into his villa quietly, tip-toed along the hall-way.

There was a bottle of scotch in his bedroom. He needed a snort before he faced Mrs. Makepeace.

"Bertie—is that you?"

Maisie Makepeace came into the hall, turned on the light. Bertram sat down suddenly on the stairway and blinked.

"It's me," he said weakly. "But is that you?"

"It is," said Maisie, pirouetting in her kimono. "Isn't it marvelous? It must be those tablets I've been taking. But they acted so quickly. It's just like magic. And I feel so fit and happy. But honey"—she came forward, smiling—"this is about the only thing I can wear at the moment. Everything else is too small for me..."

"I'll write out a check first thing," breathed Bertram, getting up. "Buy yourself a whole new wardrobe."

Two soft, well-covered arms slid around his neck.

"Darling... You don't really like that girl, do you?"

"What girl? Oh—Ethel?" Bertram adjusted a waist into his arm. "No. She's a nice kid. But what's she got that you haven't got more of—now?"

In blissful silence, he answered his own question.

"SHAKE" ANALYZER

★ By L. A. BURT ★

IN ONE of the new buildings being constructed on the campus of a California University, instruments are being inserted in the "bones" or structural steel skeleton in order to analyze down to the last jigger, the behavior of the building under stress and shock.

Subject to minor quakes, the exact reaction of every part of the building will be clearly shown on the recording instruments. And since the installation has been made for the life of the building, the next twenty or thirty years will provide a most complete autobiography of a building's behavior yet available.

Such knowledge is important for it will show exactly how strong a building must be to resist definite forces. This knowledge will be useful should the dreaded atomic war ever come.

Seismography, the study of natural shakes, is playing an ever more important role in research. Through instruments such as those installed in the building, our knowledge of the explosion of the Russian atomic bomb, was obtained.

TAILORED ISOTOPES

★ By JON BARRY ★

FROM THE laboratories at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, an ever-increasing stream of radioactive materials is flowing forth. Here, from the heart of the atom bomb country stems a flood of innocent lead containers, bearing within them, not the ravening neutrons of death and destruction, but the promise of life and hope. Radioactive isotopes, tailored to the uses of the biological laboratory and the hospital, are coming out in great quantities.

These materials, deadly in themselves (they are encased in heavy sheaths of lead), have uses that may save many lives. Now it is possible for a scientist to obtain these rare materials at reasonable cost and use them in research. Isotopes are important to the biological technician because with them he can do something that scientists have longed for—he can "tag" individual body atoms—he can know what is going where.

It is the use of radioactive isotopes that offers hope against cancer and leukemia and other equally monstrous killers. What a promise for the future they may hold!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

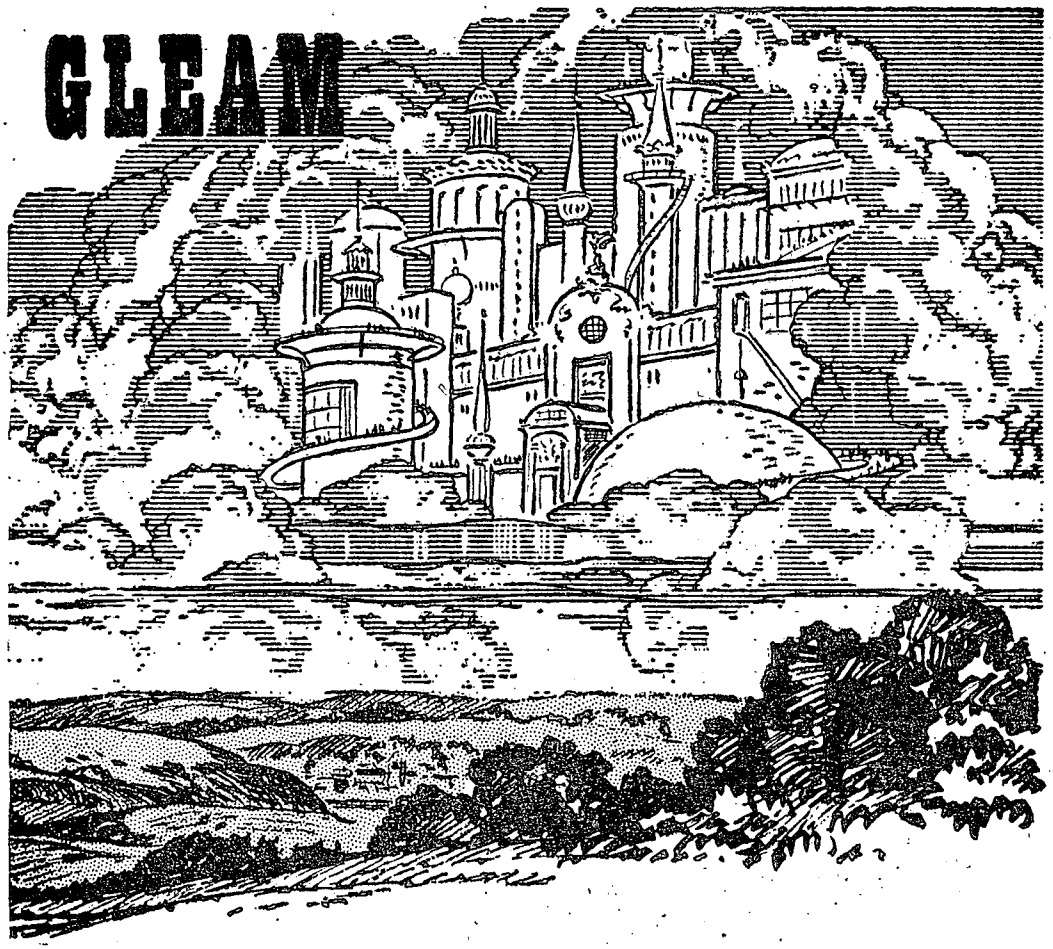
WHERE TALL TOWERS

By Robert Moore Williams

There it was, just as the man had said it would be. Dick and Kathie stared in awe...

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GLEAM



Dick and Kathie trusted the man and went with him to see the City. The trouble was, the city didn't really exist — yet . . .

LIKE A child taking holiday, the wind ran whooping down the hillside. Having gained speed in this mad slide, it ran hilariously through the willow trees, crossed the brook, and raced still whooping up the hill where the red clover grew. From the top of that hill—as if the purpose of this whole maneuver had been to gain all possible speed for this one effort—it leaped madly into the sky as if striving to reach there some haven of the winds.

In his chair under the willow trees, Grandfather Rucker saw that the two children were growing tired of listening to him. "Run along and play," he said, his voice gruff to hide the twinge of hurt within him. "Run along. I am tired of talking."

They went, skippity-hoppity, down to the spring. He leaned back in his chair under the willow trees. For a while he watched the antics of the wind in the field of red clover, then

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he watched the sky. . .

Dick was leaning over the spring, looking for the single solitary old crawfish that lived on the bottom of that crystal pool. He did not see the man come down the long road where the summer's dust was deep. He did not know a stranger was near until he heard Kathie say:

"Why, there's a man. Hello, man."

Dick looked up. The man standing there in the dusty road was not such a man as can be seen any day in summer. His clothing was a soft golden color and he did not wear a suit but a loose robe which came almost to his ankles. The robe was pulled down over his shoulders and his hands were folded out of sight in it, so Dick could not see them. But Dick could see his face. It was a beautiful brown, like the face of a young man who has been much in the sun, but somehow this man did not seem to be young. His eyes were old; they were not like the eyes of any man Dick had ever seen except, possibly, those of Grandfather Rucker when Grandfather Rucker was watching the passing of the wind.

The man did not speak. So Kathie, who at five did not know there was anything but love in the world, said:

"Hello, man. Why don't you talk to us, man?"

Something that looked like the shadow of a smile went across the man's face. But he did not speak.

"Would you like a drink?" Kathie said. She took the tin cup from its resting place between the moss-covered stones and filled it with water. Splashing silver drops at every step, she trotted with it to the man in the dusty road. In Kathie's experience every man who stopped here wanted a drink.

And this man too. He smiled and took the cup from her hand. "Thank you, little miss."

DICK CLEARLY heard the words. But he was watching closely and the thing he saw astonished him so much he jumped up and ran and stood beside Kathie and looked up at the man to make sure. The man drank the water slowly, as though he relished every drop of it. He smiled and looked down and said:

"Spring water. Yes. I have needed a drink of spring water for a very long time, I think. Thank you, little miss."

Dick saw the same thing happen again. In his surprise, he blurted out the words: "You talk like Edgar Bergen."

The man had not opened his mouth when he spoke. He had not moved his lips. Dick, at seven, had very keen eyes and he had seen this thing happen.

Kathie had seen it too. She jumped up and down in great excitement.

"Do it again, man. Do it lots."

"Eh? Do what lots?"

"Talk like Edgar Bergen!" Dick and Kathie said together.

"And who is—ah—Edgar Bergen?" Now the man opened his mouth when he spoke but he did not do it very well for some of the words came out when his mouth was closed. Dick saw this and was a little disappointed but Kathie was not critical.

"You know about Edgar Bergen and—and Charlie McCarthy," Kathie said, as if she had explained all that any man needed to know.

And she had explained all that was necessary, it seemed. The man looked at her very thoughtfully. "Yes. Ah. Yes. I see."

So he talked like Edgar Bergen and now his lips did not move at all. Dick nodded approvingly at this performance and Kathie squealed in glee and danced in circles around the man. The daisies growing on the slope be-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

side the spring suddenly found voices and told them in soft flowerish tones how nice it was to be a daisy nodding in the wind. A bumblebee that came buzzing by stopped and talked to them. He told them he was gathering honey to take back to his nest in the clover field, and Kathie, who was usually a little reserved with bumblebees, was not afraid of this one at all. For he was a nice bee. A blackbird that came down to drink from the spring gave them a pleasant, "Good morning." It was fun.

But Dick thought it was the most fun when the old crawfish came out of his hole in the bottom of the spring and floated to the top of the water and spoke to them in a thin, reedy voice. Usually the crawfish stayed in his hole. Most of the time, like Grandfather Rucker, he seemed to be watching and waiting, though for what, no one knew.

"I'll bet grandfather would like to see this!" Dick said. He started to lift his voice, to call his grandfather, but the man said, "Wait. Where is your grandfather?"

"There under the willow trees."

The man looked. "But he's asleep," he said. Sure enough, Grandfather Rucker was dozing there in his chair. "We wouldn't want to wake him, would we?" the man said.

"I guess not," Dick said.

Kathie was still laughing at the crawfish. "Isn't he funny? You must stay with us always, man, and make things talk."

It was suddenly very quiet by the spring. The only sound was the whisper of the wind in the willow trees and the gurgle of the water in the brook. The crawfish was silent. But the crawfish stayed on top of the water and looked up.

The man said, slowly: "Do you really want me to stay with you?"

"I sure do." She walked to his side and looked up, for Kathie was the friend of the whole wide world and everything that lived in it except, sometimes, bumblebees, and everything in the whole wide world was her friend too. "We want you to stay with us always and always, don't we, Dick?"

"You bet we do," Dick said.

"I—" the man said. "I— Wouldn't you rather come home with me instead?"

KATHIE'S face said she did not know about this. It would be nice, but— She appealed to Dick for decision. Dick did not know either. "Where is your home?" Dick said. He had been wondering about this. Perhaps the man had come from a circus?

"No, not a circus," the man said. He looked toward the clover field beyond the brook. "I came from a far country."

"Africa?"

"No."

"But Africa is a far country?"

The man's eyes were on Dick. "My country is far in a different way."

"Is it a nice country?" Kathie said.

The man smiled. "Yes, but it would be nicer, I think, if you were there."

"Well," Kathie said. "If it is a nice country, we could go with you but I could not stay very long."

"Why not, child?"

"My mother would miss me."

"Your mother? Ah, yes, your mother." He said nothing more but seemed to be thinking. Dick watched his face. It seemed to Dick that the man was sad about something. Dick thought about far countries and what they were like and the man thought too, about something else. A rebellious expression appeared on his face. "I'm going to do it," he said. "I am, I am!" He put his hand inside his robe.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When it came out, it held a bright glass ball. He handed the ball to Kathie.

"Here, little miss, this is for you and Dick."

It was a beautiful thing and Kathie said, "Ooh," in delight, but Dick was a little disappointed. There had been talk about a far country. Was this more grown-up talk, a promise never kept? "Aren't you going to take us?"

"Yes," the man answered. "That is—you see—I can't exactly take you with me. You have to go yourself. But this ball will show you the way."

"Like a map?" Dick asked.

"Yes. Like a map. Look at it."

Kathie was already looking at it. Dick looked too. In color it was a creamy white but in the center was a light blue haze, like the color of the sky seen from afar. Little points of light danced in the blue of that far-off sky. It was pretty, but Dick could not see how it could be a map. He looked up to ask.

The man was gone.

Dick ran to the road. He looked to the south, down the long road, but he did not see the man in that direction. He looked to the north. The man was not in sight this way either. Dick looked in the dust, to see which way the man had gone. The dust was heavy and thick—and without footprints.

While Dick was trying to understand how the man could walk in the dust without leaving footprints, Kathie called. Running to her, he almost stepped on the crawfish, which had come out of the spring and was walking on the ground. Feelers waving, eyes extended, the crawfish seemed to be trying to find something. Dick stopped, astonished.

"What do you want, old crawfish?"

"Which way did he go?" the waving feelers seemed to say.

"Look!" Kathie squealed. "Look through it this way, Dick."

She held the ball level with her face and closed one eye and looked through it out across the brook and over the clover field where the wind was whooping up the hill. Dick took it and looked too. Kathie danced up and down.

AT FIRST Dick could see nothing, except the blue of that far-away sky. Then he saw something moving in that sky and as he stared, keeping one eye closed all the time, the something that had moved in the sky swam closer and closer. He saw what it was. It reminded him of a picture in a fairy book of a castle on a hill. Only this was not a castle. It was a—city. Made of glass and bright metal, it gleamed in the sun under that far-off sky.

He jerked the glass away from his eye. Beyond the clover field, beyond the top of the hill where the wind vaulted into the sky, the city glistened in the sun. He did not need the glass to see it now. It was there, just beyond the top of the hill.

"That's where the man went," Dick said. "I— Let's— Come on, Kathie."

Kathie was so excited she didn't say a word. She took Dick's hand and they crossed the brook. Somehow they didn't seem to use the stepping stones and they didn't get their feet wet. Was there water in the brook? Dick did not notice. It was not wet water anyhow.

They didn't have any trouble climbing the woven-wire fence around the clover field, either. Climbing that fence had always been hard, even for Dick, because of the two strands of sharp barbed-wire at the top. But it was not hard to climb now. They seemed to climb it without noticing they were doing it. He did not wonder much about the fence. He was

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looking at the city.

It seemed very near. But it must have been farther than he thought for they walked a long time without getting closer. Kathie began to get tired. Her legs were short and she couldn't walk as fast as Dick but she tried hard to keep up. Once she looked back to see how far they had come.

"Oh."

Dick looked back. He couldn't see Kathie's house or his house either. He had been in the clover field before and he knew both houses could be seen from here. But now he couldn't see them. There was a blue haze that made him think of late afternoon when the sun was setting and the shadows were growing long.

Kathie was afraid. "Dick, it's awful far."

"Do you want to go back?"

"Well—" She hung her head.

It *was* awful far, Dick could see. He was a little afraid too, but he was seven. He couldn't let Kathie see he was afraid. So he reminded her that the man who talked like Edgar Bergen was in the city and maybe he would have Charlie with him now? Didn't she want to see Charlie? Yes, she did.

Hand in hand, they went on to the city. It was closer now. They saw it had a high wall around it, with gates in the wall. They went to the closest gate and knocked and the gate opened.

A little bald-headed man looked out. He was wearing the same kind of golden robe as the man who had talked to them by the spring but he was not quite as tall as that man.

"Well," he said. "Well. What do we have here?" He seemed surprised to see them and not pleased. Or rather he seemed both pleased and not pleased.

"The man said we could come," Dick said.

"Eh? What's that? He did, did he?" Gruffness crept into his voice. "Hmmm. That would be Orman, naturally. He was back to the world today. I should have been expecting something like this, naturally. Well."

He rubbed his chin and looked at them. "Well. But you may as well come in, since you are here, but what we will do with you, I do not for the life of me see. Well. Come in. I shall have to see Orman about *this*."

HE HELD the gate open for them. They went in. Kathie's eyes got big when she looked at what was to be seen. There were tall gleaming buildings rising up to the very sky. There were parks, with green grass and flowers growing and fountains spurting water that turned into rainbows while she looked. There were birds of many colors.

But she could not smell the fragrance of the flowers and the fountains made no sound and the birds did not sing. There was silence over the city.

"Orman," the little man said. "Come to gate thirty-seven at once. Do you understand?"

He did not raise his voice and he did not open his mouth when he spoke but the children heard him clearly. He waited for an answer. It did not come.

"Orman!"

No answer.

"Orman, you hear me and there is no use in pretending you don't. You just don't want to come and help me clear up the mess you have caused, naturally. Orman, my patience is about exhausted. You come here immediately."

"Oh, all right." The answer came from afar but Orman came quickly. Strangely, the children did not see him coming until he was right there. Sure enough, he was the man who

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had talked to them by the spring.

He smiled at them. "Hello, Kathie, hello, Dick."

"You got here mighty fast," Dick said. "Did you come the same way we did?"

"No," Orman answered. "Not exactly."

"Then how did you come. We came as fast as we could but you beat us. Did you come in an airplane?"

"No," Orman said. He squatted down on his heels and started to tell them how he had come. The little man said, "Orman." Orman acted as if he hadn't heard. The little man said, "Orman!" in a much sharper tone of voice.

"Aw, Rudolf," Orman said. "Why don't you get lost?"

Rudolf's face got white first, then it got purple. His eyes bulged and Dick was afraid he was going to explode. Rudolf talked for at least five minutes without stopping once. Orman rose to his feet and patiently waited for Rudolf to finish.

"Why did you do it, Orman?" Rudolf ended. "Just tell me why you did it?"

"Aw," Orman said. He looked down at the ground and scuffed a piece of gravel aside with the toe of his sandal. "Well—"

"I am waiting to hear what you say," Rudolf said. His voice had lost the point of its sharpness.

"Well—" said Orman. He swept his arm in a gesture that included all of the gleaming city. "We don't have any of them here. And I thought it would be kind of nice—"

"Oh," Rudolf said. "I see." All the sharpness was gone from his voice. He was silent.

In all that gleaming city there was silence. There was not even the friendly sound of the rushing wind. The birds flying through the air did not cry out and there was no sound from the splashing fountains. The silence was the kind that goes through lonely dreams.

KATHIE clung to Dick's hand and stood very close to him, her eyes open very wide. "Oh..." she said. The little cry was the only sound in all that vast silence.

"You hear?" said Orman.

"I hear," said Rudolf. He hesitated, then spoke quickly, his voice tight with sudden, inexplicable fright. "But we can't keep them. You know we can't. You know it."

"Aw," said Orman. He scuffed the toe of one sandal against the toe of the other. "Why not? They are of the chosen—"

"Of course they are of the chosen," Rudolf answered quickly. "Otherwise they would not have been able to come here even with your help. But that is the more reason why we cannot keep them."

Orman shook his head. "I don't see it."

"They have things to do," Rudolf answered. "The boy, especially."

"I know," Orman answered and there was rebellion in his voice. "But must they climb *all* the mountains and fly *all* the oceans and build dams to turn every river from its course? Can't one mountain go unclimbed?"

"Not one," Rudolf answered.

"Must all of them spend their lives in stuffy laboratories where the smell of chemicals fouls the air and the flash of the lightning they are trying to chain threatens their lives? Can't some of them come to us as little children, so that the sounds of their voices may make us glad and the sight of their faces make us a little less lonely here in our dreams?"

Rudolf was really frightened now.

"Orman. They must do every one of these things. Every pound of con-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crete must go into every dam and every ocean must be crossed and every mountain climbed. That is how they build this city, Orman. And they must work, all of them, even as we worked, for a long time yet, before it is built. If we bring two of them here as children the work they are supposed to do will remain undone and the building of this city will be by that much delayed."

Rudolf's voice shook. The city was quiet. There was the stir of no single sound in all that vast lonely silence.

"Then let it be delayed," Orman said. "I do not care. It is lonely here." His voice trailed off.

Rudolf's face was lined with sudden pain. "Orman, you are betraying us. You are betraying yourself. You are betraying *this!*" His arm swept in a circle that included all the gleaming silent city. "Finally, you are betraying *them.*"

If it was a bad thing that Rudolf said, Orman seemed not to hear. He took Kathie's hand and she gave it to him trustingly. He reached out for Dick's hand but Dick drew back. Dick had listened to all that had been said. He had not understood it, except dimly, but part of it had thrilled him as he had never been thrilled before.

Orman smiled. "Do not be afraid."

"I'm not afraid."

Orman changed his tactics. "I am going to show you the city. Don't you want to look at it?"

This worked very nicely. Dick was conscious of a vague yearning somewhere inside of him, a yearning that was stronger than his fears. He went with Orman, to see the city, but he did not take the man's hand.

They walked down the broad silent street. A man sitting in one of the parks saw them and looked astonished. He came quickly but at a sign from Orman he walked silently behind them.

Bright birds flew through the air.

"Why don't the birds sing?" Kathie asked.

Orman smiled. "They will sing," he said. They did. The air was suddenly alive with the sound of their song. The robin and the thrush, the shy catbird and the brazen blue jay, all sang. The fountains splashed merrily and the flowers talked.

KATHIE cried out in glee and even Dick laughed a little. Orman looked happy. The oldness went out of his eyes as he watched them. They walked and walked. Orman seemed to grow happier with every step he took.

Then Kathie said, "I'm hungry."

Orman said, "Oh." The happiness went out of his face. The birds stopped singing and the fountains were still.

"May we have something to eat?" Kathie said.

Orman said, "Oh."

Dick was hungry too but he hadn't said anything about it. He watched Orman. Again Orman's eyes were like the eyes of Grandfather Rucker when Grandfather Rucker was watching the blowing of the wind.

"Kathie is hungry," Dick said. "We must get her something to eat."

"I know," Orman said. He sighed.

"But we must get her something to eat," Dick said. "Don't you have anything to eat here?"

"N-o," Orman answered. "I did not think of that until now, but we do not have anything to eat here. No, Rudolf was right in more ways than one but I was blinded by my loneliness, and I hoped— But no matter."

He sighed. "Now we must go back."

They turned. Dick was surprised. There in the street behind them, following them in complete silence, were many people. Hundreds of people,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

maybe thousands. Men and sweet-faced women, watching. They made a lane for the children and smiled as they went past but under the smiles was loneliness.

"Come again, children," Voices murmured from the watchers.

"We will," Dick said. "Later."

Rudolf still waited by the gate. When he saw them coming he ran to meet them. He put his hand on Orman's shoulder. His voice was choked.

"Old friend, old friend, it would be good to hear the voices of children in this lonely silence where we wait near the end of time. Someday we will hear them—but not yet. Now you must take back these two, that they may do their part toward making reality out of this thing that we have dreamed, that the building of this city may not be unnecessarily delayed. I will remain here at the gate and when you return we will play chess together, to shorten a little the time of our waiting."

He opened the gate and they went out. Dick looked at the city. Gleaming tier on gleaming tier, it rose above them into the blue of that far-off sky. off sky.

"Mister," he said. "Mister Orman."

"Yes, Dick, someday you will return to this city. But in the meantime—"

He seemed to listen. "I hear Kathie's mother calling to her, so you must hurry."

Orman was gone. Dick looked for him. The city was gone—fled, faster than smoke vanishing in the driving wind. They were in the clover field. The wind was whooping up the slope gaining speed for its mad leap into the sky.

Kathie's mother had come down to the spring looking for them. Grandfather Rucker had awakened and was leaning on his cane looking for them. They could hear Kathie's mother calling.

"Here we are, mother," Kathie called. "Here we are in the clover field."

THEY HAD trouble with the high fence and Kathie slipped on one of the stepping stones in the brook and got her foot wet.

"I was worried," Kathie's mother said. "I called and you did not answer. Where have you been?"

"A man came and showed us the most bee-yut-i-ful city over there in the clover field and he gave us a glass to show us how to go to this bee-yut-i-ful city and we went to it and a little man met us by the gate and he didn't want us to stay but the big man came and made him let us stay a little while and the birds didn't sing and they didn't have anything to eat, not a thing—" Kathie ran out of breath.

"Oh," Kathie's mother said. "You have been playing the game of make-believe."

"No," Dick said quickly. "We really went to the city. It was right over there in the clover field."

"Ah. But where is it now?"

"I don't know," Dick answered. "It's gone."

Kathie's mother smiled and went up the slope to her house. Dick could see that she had not believed him.

"What is this about a city?" Grandfather Rucker spoke.

"There is a city in the clover field."

"What? Where?"

"There." Dick pointed. "And I can prove it." He reached into his pocket for the glass that Orman had given him, the wonderful glass that was actually a map showing the way to the city.

The glass was gone. While Grandfather Rucker waited, Dick looked

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in all his pockets. "I—I must have lost it," he said. He felt weak inside. He wanted somebody to believe in the city he had seen and visited but now the glass was gone and nobody—

"Tell me about this city," Grandfather Rucker said.

Dick told him the whole story, of how Orman had talked and how the crawfish had looked and how they had gone to the city and what had happened there.

"Ah," Grandfather Rucker said.

Dick started to cry.

"I don't need a glass, or anything else, to see *that* city," Grandfather Rucker said.

"You mean you can see it with your own eyes?" Dick gasped.

"Of course," Grandfather Rucker said. "Every year that has passed, I have watched them building it."

He was going to say more but just then Kathie's mother called from her house that lunch was ready and from Dick's house across the road the dinner bell began to ring. Kathie went scrambling up the slope and Dick went too. Both had been to a far country and both were hungry. But Dick stopped and looked back.

There was wind in the sky and wind in the willows. Across the brook there was wind in the clover field. Grandfather Rucker had not come with them. He had crossed the brook and was walking across that wind-swept hill where now the clover grew. He had thrown his cane away and he was walking with his head held high and his back held straight, walking toward that city in the far-off sky, walking as if he knew exactly where he was going, walking as if from the summit of that hill—like the wind—he expected to pass directly to some haven in the sky.

As Dick watched, the tall figure passed over the hill—and out of sight. He had gone beyond the top of the hill? Or had he—

For a moment, glimpsed there in that far distance of the sky, tall towers gleamed, and were gone.

Then there was only the wind.

SUPER RAMJETS

★ By CHARLES RECOUR ★

THE OLD "V-1", that ferocious example of German "Schrecklichkeit" and terror used during the end of the Second World War, is being revamped into a masterpiece of American guided missile work.

The "V-1" was essentially a small-winged plane with a simple flutter-vane motor, which took in air and kerosene at the front end and spewed out highly heated gases at the rear. This drove the missile on the jet principle. But a valve closed in front periodically making the thing burp and roar. While it could do four or five hundred miles an hour loaded with a war-head and set into a trajectory after an initial launching from a rocket-assist, it had its limitations.

The American version is a marvel of efficiency and simplicity. It's nothing but a hollow tube open at both ends. Kerosene is sprayed in the chamber and air rushing through, carried by the forward motion of the missile, burns th liquid creating a powerful thrust. There are no vanes or valves. Terrific speeds of better than a thousand miles an hour can be obtained. The only flaw—and this is not necessarily a flaw—is the fact that the missile must be going fast to begin with to carry air through it. So it's launched by a plane or a rocket-assist.

The chances are mighty good that this new weapon will be one of the most common in the store of ram and rocket jobs that we maintain. In addition, controls of one sort or another are built into the gadget so that it can be guided effectively to the point of maximum damage.

In spite of the hopeful talk of defense experts it appears that the defense is lagging seriously behind the attack judging from missiles like these. Unless there is some secret counter-missile work about which we don't know, the picture looks bad for the anti-aireraft people...

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A DOG

By Frances M. Deegan

They say a man may lead a dog's life — but here was a dog who was having a man of a time and didn't mind shouting about it!

MY SPACE-GOING uncle—Reuben his name was—Uncle Reuben Thatch—was always bringing gifts back with him. Wherever he went, Mars, Venus, the asteroids, he always managed to pick up something. Something bizarre and usually dangerous.

Whatever it was, there was one thing sure: Aunt Jenny wouldn't give it house room. In fact, Uncle Reuben was lucky to get into the house himself, even after he had been released from the customary ten days' quarantine. Aunt Jenny had no illusions about what went on around the rigidly controlled bases off there on the established space runs. She had a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The garden party became a scampering confusion as Johnny stood before the fence separating the two yards and hurled a string of curses at them

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

word for it. She called it consorting.

"Consorting with Heaven knows what!" she would say, and chase him out of the house. She had no respect for a space hero. None whatever.

At our house it was different. Uncle Reuben was my mother's brother, and she naturally had a tender regard for the old rascal. My father had a fine, humorous tolerance; and my sister Maxine and I enjoyed being scared or shocked. We looked forward eagerly to his scheduled returns, and we were never disappointed.

There was the time he brought back the rock-boring bugs from Asteroid 32, and they got loose and started boring holes in everything. They had a holey holiday, tunneling through the streets, buildings and bridges in our village, until the chemists worked out a liquid compound that discouraged them. Everything had to be sprayed every forty-eight hours, but in two weeks' time the bore bugs got discouraged. They disappeared. They are probably still boring away somewhere deep inside the earth. In a couple of centuries they may come out on the other side, if they last that long.

Then there was the time Uncle Reuben brought back the strangle vine from Venus. It was pretty. The stem was blood red, and the white, heart-shaped leaves had red veins. We planted it, Maxine and I, and were going to train it to go straight up. Uncle Reuben said it would grow fast; but nothing ever grew like that vine did. It didn't grow, it traveled. By the time we got up the next morning, there were complaints from all over town. Overnight the vine had encompassed the village, up and down and all around. Just one big loving heart vine, clinging to everything. But when they started hacking at it, it bled and fought back. It turned savage and reached frantically and clung tighter and tighter. It didn't actually kill anybody, but they called it a man-killer. It squeezed plenty of men before Uncle Reuben saved the day by digging up the roots and burning them with nitric acid.

He said it was a shame to destroy such a valuable rarity, and pointed out how it might have been trained to useful purposes. But the town council decided the rarer it was, the better they liked it; and please not to bring any more savage plants like that back from wherever he was going next.

Considering the dangerous nature of his gifts, it might seem strange that Uncle Reuben was allowed to remain active and in good standing. But in those days the authorities were very lenient with space heroes. There were not too many of them, and very few who knew their way around as well as Uncle Reuben. He had that knack of adaptability which all human Argonauts must have had. He was never lost. He was never surprised. And he never caused an incident which backfired and cost lives and money. He got along wherever he went by adapting himself to whatever conditions and customs he found. It made him seem rough and crazy by earthly standards, but as a space captain he was supreme.

AT THE TIME he brought back that bum, Johnny-dog, from Mars, he was already a grizzled veteran. And Maxine and I were grown-up sophisticates. She was eighteen and I was seventeen, and there was nothing we needed to know. Therefore, Johnny-dog's language and habits were not so much shocking as they were annoying, especially to Maxine, who had decided to be a lady. I think what decided her was the fellow next door. A fellow named Harley Smithfour. He was an anthropologist, and also a gentleman. He lived alone except for a well-behaved little blond spaniel. She was a perfect little lady who seldom

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spoke without permission.

It is hard to imagine a time when dogs and cats could not talk. It seems as if they must always have had the power of speech. And yet I know that for centuries they did not speak, but only made different sounds—cries and growls and barks, to express themselves.

There were times after Johnny-dog joined our household when I wished that this power of speech might be suppressed once more. But I suppose it would have to be bred out of them scientifically, and might take a very long time. Anyway there was no suppressing Johnny-dog once he got started. He seemed to take an obscene delight in shocking people, although I know that he was not capable of deliberate intent, but only repeated what he had learned from his former master. We began to get a fairly accurate picture of this former master, just living with Johnny and enduring his bad habits. I was very much surprised when I found out who he was.

It was in June when Uncle Reuben came out of quarantine with Johnny-dog, and they came straight to our house. Aunt Jenny lived in a different village, which was fortunate. I hate to think of what might have happened if Johnny-dog had made one of his cracks in front of Aunt Jenny.

Uncle Reuben was a big burly man with a square, tough face and that high stepping walk that all spacemen acquire. They always look as if they were mounting an endless flight of stairs, and yet there is something effortless about it as if they were really walking on air. Uncle Reuben claimed it was the result of overcoming gravitational variations, and that they probably could walk on air if they set their minds to it. Anyway he came stepping along on this bright June day with big shaggy Johnny-dog bobbing along beside him.

My mother said: "What in Heaven's name has he brought us now?"

"Looks like a dog," my father said. "A tame dog—I think."

"Oh, mercy!" Maxine said with ladylike distaste. "What a horrible hound!"

And in fact, the dog did not look at all pleasant. Even with his head hanging down he was four feet high. He had powerful legs and big feet, but he didn't walk straight. He shambled along like a guilty ruffian, bobbing and weaving as if he expected an attack at any moment. His long face was not so much surly as it was gloomy. As if he expected the worst and was fully prepared not to like it.

Uncle Reuben saw us and lifted a stout arm, sending a long ringing "Halloo-o-o" bellowing across the garden. The dog shook his head and showed his fangs and Uncle Reuben whacked him on the ear and said something forceful. Before we could speculate any further about the beast, Uncle Reuben was on us, embracing each of us, including my father. The dog went right on into the house, and I didn't try to stop him.

After Uncle Reuben got through manhandling us in his affectionate way, I said: "It went in the house."

"It!" he shouted. "Him! That's a dog, boy. A space-going hound with a heart of steel. And smart? Why, say—come in here now, and I'll show you something!"

We went in and the hound was stretched out on my mother's white satin divan. She said: "Oh, no..." in a kind of desperate way.

"Johnny!" Uncle Reuben bellowed. "Get off there, you—"

Johnny lifted his big head and peered at Uncle Reuben through slitted eyes; then he slid his carcass off the divan and stood there blinking thoughtfully, as if he were contemplating something particularly frightful.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Johnny, say hello to your new family," Uncle Reuben suggested pleasantly.

The hound gave a dog-like grunt of disgust and slumped to the carpet with his head between his paws, and closed his eyes.

Uncle Reuben took a step as if he meant to kick him, and my father interposed hastily. "Let him alone, he's in a strange place. What—er, what kind of a dog is he?"

"He's a collie-hound. Special breed, and smart as a quip."

I DIDN'T know what a collie-hound was supposed to look like, but I didn't think this was it. This thing looked like a cross between a hyena and a grizzly bear. And if he was smart, it certainly didn't show. Except that he kept rolling up one evil, red-rimmed eye to glare at Uncle Reuben, who was giving us an account of his latest voyage with booming gusto.

"So this fellow that owns Johnny, he had to go away for a while," Uncle Reuben said, and Johnny rolled his eye. "He didn't want to leave a smart dog like Johnny behind, so he asked me if I'd take care of him. I said I knew just the place with a fine family in the prettiest village at Central Spaceport. So here he is."

"Then it's just a temporary loan," my father said with a good deal of relief.

"I'd say so, yes. Unless, of course, you get so attached to Johnny you don't want to give him up."

"What does he eat?" my mother asked anxiously.

"Anything," Uncle Reuben said heartily. "Anything at all."

Johnny lifted his head and yawned impolitely, and closed his big fangs with a snap.

"Are you hungry, doggy?" my mother asked.

Johnny shuddered and his face seemed to fall apart in a sickly leer. He groaned and let his head sink back to the carpet as if he were in the last stages of senile disintegration.

"Funny they'd let him out of quarantine in that shape," my father said. "Are you sure he's—"

"Oh, sure. Johnny's all right!" Uncle Reuben insisted. "It must have been something he ate. You know how it is. The boys at the Port probably over-fed him after he was cleared last night. You're all right, aren't you, Johnny?"

The dog glared at him balefully and said nothing at all. It was not until Uncle Reuben had left to pay his duty call on Aunt Jenny that Johnny spoke.

My mother and father and Maxine had walked down to the roadway to the spinner Uncle Reuben was privileged to use as an executive officer. When I stepped back into the house Johnny got to his feet and stood there swaying slightly.

"How about a beer?" he mumbled.

"We haven't got any beer."

"Oh, brudder!" he groaned and looked around hopelessly.

"We've got some mead."

"Wot de hell's dat?"

"It's a drink. Made out of honey. It's sweet. But it's not as strong as beer."

"Oh, brudder! De joint's arid. I gotta go."

"No you don't!" I said sharply. "If you get loose, we'll all be in trouble. The town council warned us the last time! Listen, I'll fix you up with something if you'll keep your mouth shut."

"My pal! Gimme!"

We went into my father's den and I gave him a good shot of medicinal liquor in an ash tray. He lapped it up, and said: "Come again. Please, pally! Johnny-dog is dyin'. Wow! Gimme life!"

I gave him a little more and put

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the flask back in the cabinet, and closed the door firmly. The family was coming back through the garden.

"Drag your tail out of here," I said, "and keep your mouth shut."

"You're a pal, pally!" he muttered hoarsely, and stepped gaily into the living room. "Hi-ya, folks!" he croaked jovially. "Nice place ya got here."

"Well, well," my father said. "Quite a rapid recovery." He gave me a quick look and I knew he was wise, but he didn't make an issue of it. Instead he said: "The back yard is the place for him. Plenty of room. But I think we had better tie him until we see how he behaves."

"Oh-oh. Watcher step, Johnny-dog," the hound muttered. "Boss man got ideas!"

We discovered that Johnny wore a metal collar under the shaggy fur. It was nearly two inches wide and half an inch thick and it was welded together. There were some scratches on it which I couldn't make out, and I didn't fool around with it because of the low snarl which started in the back of the dog's throat. The liquor seemed to be taking effect, and I had no way of knowing how the beast would react. I fastened the rope hastily and stepped away from him.

HE LET OUT a series of shrill yips and went galloping and prancing about the grassy yard like a grotesque puppy. He rolled on the grass and kicked his big feet in the air. He certainly looked silly, and I started to laugh, but my father said: "That dog is smart. He meant to show us what a terrible handicap it was to be tied up. But we fooled him by giving him plenty of rope. See? His act was a flop."

The dog rolled to his feet and shook himself and gave us a baffled, indignant look, muttering something to himself. At this point Harley Smith-four appeared in the yard next door, and my father said: "I don't want to get tied up with that windbag, I've got work to do. He'll want to know about Reuben. You go and talk to him, Philip."

"All right," I said. "But don't just go away and forget about me. I'll be out here all night. Tell mother to call me in half an hour."

There was a high wire fence between our properties and Harley was coming toward it purposefully, so I strolled over that way. He was a tall, studious type, very finicky about his appearance and fussy about good manners. I couldn't see what attracted Maxine, but at the time she had quite a crush on him. And he certainly did everything he could to encourage her, which didn't make me like him any better.

"Good afternoon, Philip!" he called with that forced gayety which seemed to drop his words about three feet short of the goal. "I see your big Uncle Reuben is back. Did he have a good run?"

Not that he cared. More than once Uncle Reuben had upset his nice little theories about the origin of various species. It must have been very painful for an advanced type like Harley to be defeated in his own field by a rough primitive type like Uncle Reuben.

"About as usual," I answered in a bored way.

"I've just been reading the newstape," he lowered his voice confidentially. "I suppose he gave you all the inside data about that fellow Brogan?"

"Who?"

"Captain Bo Brogan. According to the newstape he tried to steal one of the Martian moons. The dispatches have just been released. Your uncle must have told you about it. They've got Brogan back on Mars in police custody. It's high time they made an

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

example of one of those lawless space captains. They think they own the universe. What does your uncle say about it?"

"Why, nothing. He didn't even mention it."

"Ah—I see!"

"I don't know what you see!" I said angrily. "But if you're implying that Uncle Reuben had anything to do with this crazy business—how can a space captain steal a moon?"

"I only know what I read on the newstape," he said stiffly. "It seems odd that your uncle wouldn't mention it, since he just came from there himself."

"He had other things to think about," I said defensively, and then I was sore because he had put me on the defensive.

It was a good thing Maxine showed up just then. She came tripping demurely across the turf with a languishing look in her eye.

"Good afternoon, Harley," she said primly. "What do you think of the hound Uncle Reuben brought us? Isn't he horrible?"

"Oh—er, yes," Harley murmured. "Rather. I shouldn't get too close to him if I were you. Not a nice specimen. He looks treacherous to me."

Johnny got up and shambled over to the fence, pushing between Maxine and me to stare at Harley.

"Nice Johnny," Maxine said and patted him gently on the head. "Say hello to Harley."

"Hullo, windbag," Johnny said. "How's yer gas holdin' up?"

"What's that?" Harley exclaimed.

Maxine looked horrified, and I said helpfully: "He just repeats what he hears. I mean, he's been around and naturally, he's picked up a lot of funny expressions. He's very smart that way."

Then to make matters worse, Lucy, the little spaniel started barking and came flopping across the lawn eagerly. Johnny took one look and his ragged ears came up attentively.

"Lucy!" Harley admonished sharply. "Stop that! Now mind your manners, miss."

Lucy stopped obediently and gazed at Johnny with big eyes. I am sure she had never seen anything quite like him.

"Hi-ya, sis?" Johnny said, and made a smacking noise with his jaws that was very suggestive. His lecherous look was too much for Lucy and she instinctively backed away.

HARLEY nodded approval. "Lucy is a lady," he said. "She doesn't want to have anything to do with him."

"Dat's whut you tink!" Johnny sneered.

"That dog has been badly trained," Harley said grimly. "I'd get rid of him if I were you. He's no sort of beast to have around the house."

"Hoo-hoo, Lucy!" Johnny yodeled and started prancing playfully. "Lucy, Lucy, Lucy!"

Lucy stared in fascination until Harley snapped: "That will do miss—in the house! At once!"

She picked herself up and trotted disdainfully toward the house.

"Oh, baby!" Johnny howled. "Have you got a lot to learn! Wait till yer in— Ow! Hey, don't! Ya wanta break m' neck?"

"If you'll excuse me," Harley said coldly, and stalked after his well-behaved spaniel.

"Oh, Philip!" Maxine wailed, as if it were my fault. "Now see what you've done—you and that horrible hound!"

"Don't be mad, honey-ma'am! Don't be mad at Johnny-dog. He don't know no better," Johnny wheedled hoarsely. "Da bum talked mean to Phil. I t'ought we was all mad attim.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'm mad attim. I hate his—"

"Shut up!" I said.

"Were you quarreling with him?" Maxine asked tearfully.

"No. Not exactly. But he did make me sore. He tried to imply that Uncle Reuben was mixed up in some crooked scheme to steal one of the Martian moons. He said Captain Bo Brogan was under arrest on Mars. It was on the newstape this afternoon."

"Captain Brogan!" Maxine gasped. Although we had never met him, he had long been one of our favorite space heroes. "Oh, why didn't Uncle Reuben tell us?"

"I don't know. Maybe it was tabu. Maybe he didn't know the dispatch was going to be released."

"Dat's ma boy!" Johnny yelped. "Dat's him! Dat's ma boy!"

We looked at Johnny's clumsy capers and we looked at each other. Maxine said: "Philip, do you suppose this is Bo Brogan's dog?"

"If it is, we've got to keep it quiet, until Uncle Reuben gives the word. I think maybe I can find out. Johnny, come here! I want to talk to you."

He gamboled across to me like a lamb wearing space boots; but the instant I touched that metal collar he turned still and tense and that light snarling started up in his throat.

"Cut it out! I want to see if you know what you're talking about. If Bo Brogan's name is on this collar, you've got to keep your big mouth shut."

"Johnny, behave!" Maxine said. "We're trying to help you."

Johnny mouthed a few curses, but he let me read what was on the collar. "Why, it's got your name on it, Maxine! Look here— 'Property of Miss Maxine Curtis, Randall Village, Central Spaceport, Terra. Regards from Capt. Bo Brogan.' There you are!"

"Oh, Philip! What shall I do?"

Johnny backed off and stared at us with a worried, puzzled look wrinkling his ugly face. He kept licking his chops nervously.

"It's all right, Johnny," I said. "But don't let anybody else touch that collar."

"No, no, no," Johnny mouthed. "Johnny-dog bite!" He loosed a terrible roar and went charging across the lawn like a mad cow.

My mother and father both came running out of the house. My father had his ray rod trembling in one fist. "Come in here, both of you!" he shouted.

Maxine grabbed my hand and we went slowly. "Hurry!" my mother gasped.

"There's no danger," I said. Johnny was still charging around and shaking his big head, growling and snapping as if he were fighting a whole army. It must have been hair-raising for my parents to watch, but Maxine and I were absorbed in the mysterious responsibility that had been thrust on us. And we understood very well that Johnny was working off anger at the invisible forces which he did not understand.

We were finally able to quiet my parents with the explanation that Johnny always exercised like that in case he ever had to fight his way through a pack of Martian tuskrats. The reason we didn't tell them what we had discovered was because Uncle Reuben hadn't told them. We felt obliged to keep mum until we had talked with him. But when I tried to get him on the radiophone, Aunt Jenny said: "He came in and went out. That's all I saw of him. And where he went, Lord only knows. Older he gets, the worse he gets."

And that was that. Uncle Reuben had disappeared. Spaceport headquarters denied any knowledge of his whereabouts. Maxine got so worried she wanted to confide in Harley

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Smithfour, and I knew I had to prevent that, at all costs. Therefore, instead of restraining Johnny, I am afraid I encouraged him to howl insults and profanity through the wire fence.

I AM ALSO afraid that we made Harley Smithfour's life fairly miserable that summer. There was the afternoon he entertained some visiting scholars and their ladies with a lawn party. We were not invited, and Maxine felt so badly that mother and father took her off to Music Village for the afternoon concert. The opportunity was too good to miss, and perhaps I did let Johnny get a little out of hand. I had finally got him broken in to the taste of mead, but even that could be potent if enough was consumed, and Johnny had four hollow legs. He was also sly enough to know that he could keep wheedling one more out of me by talking about Captain Bo Brogan. I was trying to piece the story together, but the version I got from Johnny was very mixed up, and did not seem to fit the reports that came over the newstape.

At that time the two sacred moons of Mars, called Napu and Nipo, were still tabu, but according to the newstape, Captain Brogan had gone to Napu without official permission, and had got himself installed as Supreme Keeper of the Sacred Archives. How he did it, nobody knew, but it was a flagrant violation of the Martian treaties. He ruled the moon as Supreme Keeper for five weeks, and then the patrol came in force and removed him to the jail at the interplanetary base on Mars. I knew there had to be more to it than that, but of course, Johnny was not interested in the more complex meanings of events.

"Did Bo really take over the whole moon?" I asked him.

"We was dere," he said. "Helluva place. Nuttin' but dust. Dust 'n holes. Cap'n filled 'em all up. Alla damn holes."

"What was in the holes?"

"Cats!" he spit out a curse. "Cats 'n bats. Made me sick as a man chewin' 'em. Pfui!'

"I wish I knew what Bo was doing there."

"Bo! Dat's ma boy!" Johnny mourned. "When's he comin'? Huh, Phil? When's he comin' fer Johnny-dog?"

"You're working up to a crying jag," I said. "You better go out and take a walk around the yard."

"Awright, pally. Johnny-dog is a ole stinker. Nobody loves Johnny-dog no more. . . no more. . . ". He wandered out sadly, and in a little while he started howling mournfully.

The garden party was already in progress, and I think at first they were startled, but in a little while they got annoyed. I could hear indignant voices raised. They finally penetrated Johnny's drunken sorrow, and he said quite distinctly: "Shut your own face you damn silly old so-and-so!"

There was a shocked silence, and a woman's high pitched voice said: "Oh, how dreadful!"

"Wow!" Johnny echoed, and cut loose with a whole string of epithets.

The garden party became a scampering confusion, as they tried to gather up the pieces, falling over each other in their haste to get into the house.

Johnny came prancing into the kitchen with his tail high and looking as proud as a champion. "You see that?" he chortled. "You see them ole babes hike? Johnny-dog convulsed 'em!"

"You convulsed me, too," I laughed. "You better lay low for a while. That Smithfour will be out gunning for you after this."

I was wrong about that, as I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

learned about fifteen minutes later when the law arrived. They arrived fully armed with ray rods, nets, ropes and pikes. But Johnny and I went peacefully. It was the only way, and fortunately, Johnny was in a playful mood by then. He amused the officers with his cracks, and they put us both in the same cell.

Johnny looked the place over with a practiced eye. "You ever been in this clink before, Phil?" he inquired companionably.

"No. It took you to get me in here. I'm just wondering what my father will say. I think he'll say you're a bad influence on me. Especially when he finds all those mead cans I didn't have time to get rid of."

WE MADE THE afternoon newstape, and things started happening. Out of nowhere, Uncle Reuben appeared. There was a Colonel of the Safety Patrol with him, and they had us out of jail even before my father could get there. After I had explained a few things to Uncle Reuben, and he had hugged me savagely three or four times, we went to pick up Maxine. Then all three of us, Johnny and Maxine and I, were placed in Uncle Reuben's custody and removed to safe quarters on Central Spaceport. I am glad to say that Maxine was not only loyal to Johnny and me, she was thoroughly enraged at Harley Smithfour for having us arrested. And she was looking forward just as avidly as Johnny and I were to the arrival of the next ship from Mars.

We were all waiting when he came out of quarantine. Big Bo Brogan. He came swinging down the ramp with that high stepping walk of the space rover, his hard, dark face quietly alert. And Johnny let out a fearful roar and dragged Maxine right over the railing and into Bo's arms, tangling them helplessly with the long chain that Maxine had not had sense enough to let go of. Her ankle was twisted and after they got untangled Bo had to carry her into the private office at headquarters.

Somebody brought Bo three metal saws and he removed Johnny's collar with some difficulty. He had to keep bouncing his big fist on Johnny's excited skull to make him keep still. Inside the collar were strips of microfilm, recording the secret and sacred archives of Napu. The key to the lost empire of Mars which no man had been able to find. For centuries it had existed only in legend until Bo solved the secret of the sacred moons. The race of priests who guarded the archives on Napu had long since degenerated into ignorant, superstitious creatures who had no idea what it was they guarded. All sense and meaning of the archives was lost. There was only one way to get that knowledge, and Bo Brogan had done it successfully, and then had buried the archives safely in the dust of Napu. The priests could go on guarding the dust in peaceful superstition, and in time the film records would be deciphered and the ancient empire rediscovered. And perhaps the lost art and science of Mars would be revived, and the race of Martians lifted out of their slow decay by the enterprising men of Terra.

Later Bo carried Maxine to our quarters, and Johnny and I stayed outside to get a little exercise. Johnny found his way around the building and sat down thoughtfully in the sand. He was watching a certain window. "Le's take a look, Phil," he mumbled.

"Not me. I'm no peeping tom."

"I yam, by gee! I'm gonna look."

And he did. He had to scramble up on a ledge in order to look through the window, but he didn't stay there long.

"Man, oh man!" Johnny said softly. "Dat's ma boy! Wastin' no time.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

He's kissin' her awready! He's—Wow!"

Johnny slipped and came down hard on his tail. When he got up it was bent. "Looka that..." What he said after that I ignored. I had an idea that if we paid no attention to Johnny's bad language he'd get discouraged and quit using it.

And so he did, more or less. Anyway, by the time my nephew, Reuben Brogan, was old enough to understand, Johnny had slowed up considerably except when he was out with the boys...

THE END

WARFARE BY THE SUN!

★ By SANDY MILLER ★

SCIENTISTS have recently confirmed a belief long suspected that the Earth is a victim of a bombardment which has been going on since time began. A study of the solar prominences, those gigantic hundred thousand mile tongues of flame shows that vast amounts of hydrogen gas are being flung from the sun at an enormous velocity. The Earth receives a surprising quantity of this gas.

It is now strongly believed that the colorful Aurora Borealis is a direct consequence of this bombardment. A spectroscopic study of the hydrogen prominences, compared with a spectroscopic study of the Aurora Borealis shows that the two hydrogen line-sets are alike. Furthermore there seems to be a direct correlation between solar activity and Aurora activity.

The study in detail of these solar prominences, gigantic jets of radiant gases flung upward from the sun, is made possible by an ingenious instrument known as a coronagraph. This telescopic attachment is essentially an apparatus for making an artificial eclipse of the sun so that only the edges are visible.

With the major disc of the sun blanked out, the edges show clear and clean. Photographic films are made of the prominences and when speeded up give a terrific impression of the sun's activity. It is hard to imagine the enormous distances and the massive quantities, solar manipulation of the gases involve.

It is certain that future astrogational navigators will stay far away from the sun, not only because of the enormous gravitational field which could be beaten with sufficient energy, but also because of the incredibly powerful, licking tongues of lance-like hydrogen flames!

THE END IS NOT YET...

★ By WILLIAM KARNEY ★

WITHIN THE garble of information and misinformation that centers around the new hydrogen bomb, it is possible to pick out two sets of dissenting voices. One group claims that within our time it is conceivable that a chain reaction of some sort might be set off which would send the world into a new state—a flaming nova-like sun! The other says that this is not possible and we need not worry.

Trying to get a straight answer on the question of whether or not it is theoretically possible for Man to destroy himself through atomic reactions, is rather difficult. The scientist hesitates to come out and say so for fear he'll be judged an alarmist. And the fringe-group naturally wants to believe it can't happen.

This latter argument seems specious. Within only a very short time we have had atomic energy within our possession, but during this time we have gone from the atomic uranium bomb to the thousandfold worse hydrogen bomb. A matter of a few years. If such a thing can happen, it can be said almost with absolute certainty, that the time is not far off, when from the scientific laboratories of the world, are going to issue variations of atomic energy—perhaps the h-bomb itself—which are capable of wiping out the planet Earth as we know it! It is hard to get excited over a statement like this. We've been so exposed to headline scares that it's impossible to shock us any longer.

But the terrible reality exists. Just stop and ask yourself: "How is it going to end?" And you come to the only answer—and even it isn't fully satisfactory—"There must be some world meeting which will bring men together as people of the same planet."

Maybe the first space exploration will do it. It would be too much to hope for an invasion from Mars...

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FLYING SAUCER SCIENTIST

☆ By LESLIE PHELPS ☆

BRINGING up the matter of flying saucers before a group of scientists is like telling a dirty joke at a sewing circle. Well, maybe not quite that bad, but it does cause a lot of embarrassment. Among scientists, talk of flying saucers is next to taboo.

The scientist is in a spot. He's heard a thousand reports of these mysterious discs. Eye witness accounts by the hundreds have been recorded. Reputable observers have claimed their existence. The military authorities have recognized that the subject matter is at least one for some concern.

Yet most scientists will not admit that such flying saucers exist. Why is this?

The defense of the scientist runs something like this: All right, I've heard all these reports, I've talked with the observers, yet in no case am I brought any material evidence of their existence. Until that is shown me, I can't admit their existence.

So you question the scientist; Is it possible that the flying saucers are from another planet?

The scientist will scoff politely and say no. So then you hit him with the clincher: But tens of thousands of people can't be nuts.

He'll answer something mumblingly about "mass hysteria" and then drift away.

The whole flying saucer phenomenon is really, to the scientist, a matter for producing material evidence. Until then, he will scoff. Perhaps this is not particularly intelligent but at least it's safe.

That flying saucers exist is generally agreed—by all except the scientists. But what they are is something else. Personally we tend to feel that there are such things, that they do exist, but that they're probably not extra-terrestrial. The most logical explanation seems to be that in some way, not admitted by the military, they are projectiles or missiles, possibly our own, possibly not.

It will be interesting to see the scientific reaction when the subject is finally brought into direct material view. Won't that be fun!

ARCTIC BUBBLE

☆ By JOHN WESTON ☆

IT IS INTERESTING to see how problems are solved by different approaches. And the one place where plenty of problems exist is in the military defense of the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions of Canada and Alaska. It is hard enough for men to live in these bitter regions much less fight. Housing alone is a tough problem.

The matter is important because right now we are in the process of a building a chain of radar observation stations across the top of the world to detect any possible aerial invaders. It is obvious that the rotating antenna of a radar station can't operate in the open Arctic air where snow and ice would lock in tight in no time. Furthermore the observers can't watch radarscopes at twenty below—in the open. In a word the whole apparatus must be sheltered.

Now the first thing that comes to mind is a metal or aluminum shelter. This is out because radar waves won't go through metal. How about wood? Well, it could be used, but it would require an imposingly strong structure to resist the fierce winds and massive weights of ice that would collect.

But some ingenious designer came along with the idea of using a rubber double-walled shelter shaped just like a huge sphere thirty or forty feet in diameter! This monstrous windbag is supported by internal pressure from a simple little air pump. Entry and egress is effected through an airlock.

The whole set-up can be raised atop a metal tower and the large bulky radar equipment fitted right in. If necessary ice can be cracked from the cone by simply rippling it with alternate expansions and contractions. Or heating wires can be embedded in it like an electric blanket.

The spherical shape is of course, the strongest, and terrific winds just slither over it. The double-walled construction makes heating easy. In a word, the set-up is efficient and cosy.

The power plant is the only piece of apparatus that need be located outside. Everything else is within.

It is a pleasure to think that an unorthodox approach like this can result in such a simple solution. These balloon shelters may find other uses. They may become standard installations all over the country, not only for radar equipment housing but also for emergency human quartering.

Give an American engineer a parachute and he'll use it to save his life, make his wife nylon stockings, build himself a home. There is no premium on skill!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gideon Grue staggered back in fear as he stared at the painting on the wall. Magically, a gibbet had appeared there—and the noose waited . . .

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"YOUR ROPE IS WAITING!"

By William Brengle

If a man plans murder, he must first make certain that the fates are in accord. To cross them can mean disaster!

CHARLOTTE GRUE put up her cheek to be kissed in the absent-minded manner of a wife who has been doing just that every morning for ten years. Gideon Grue let his thin cold lips touch the cheek lightly. He took his chair at the table, slipped the morning paper from its silver rack and opened it to the financial section.

"Gideon," his wife said, "I wish you'd look in at the Associated Galleries on your way to the office."

He grunted, and she went on: "They're giving Tom a separate exhibition. You could help by taking it in."

His eyes came up from the paper. "Why should I?"

Her lips tightened with faint annoyance. "He's your brother. Twin brother," she amended.

He looked away from the paper then. His thin lips twisted in a smile and his eyes, green ice set behind fleshy lids, glinted in deep amusement. "May I quote my brother—? '—I can damn well stand on my own feet, thank you—' Let the genius stand, or fall, without my help. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly. I thought I might help Tom. That was all."

"You just thought you'd help Tom," Grue mocked her words. "Sure it didn't go deeper than that?"

Her lashes spread showing the clear white of her eyes and the wondrous blue of them. "I don't think I've ever hid my feelings for Tom. You know that."

He slammed the paper to the table with a crash. "You've said enough! I don't want to hear any more about Tom, his exhibit, or your idea of my duty to him. Understand?"

"Yes. You leave no room for doubts in my mind. By the way, where did you go when you left the house at midnight last night?"

He looked blank for an instant. "Last night..... You know damn well I was in all night!"

Twin spots of color showed in her cheeks. Her soft curving mouth tightened for a second. Abruptly they softened, the color in her cheeks fled and she was Charlotte Grue again, the calm, unemotional woman he had married ten years ago. Her voice was matter-of-fact:

"As you wish. The Sloans asked whether you will find time to come to their dinner."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I don't know," he said more calmly, aware that the storm had passed. "I'll call and let you know. 'Bye—"

He did not kiss her on the way out.

THE BLOND young thing with deeply arched eyebrows that gave her an oddly expectant look, smiled shyly, and said:

"Good morning, sir."

He nodded, walked down the carpeted floor to the door to his private offices. Miss Olsen, his secretary, always dressed in a dark suit behind which a tailored white blouse showed in immaculate crispness, looked up from the mail on her desk. Long ago she had seen a movie in which the heroine had dressed so and the impression endured that the costume had been the reason for her capture of the hero. That Miss Olsen's five feet seven inches of height and one hundred and sixty pounds of weight, and rather pudgy features were not the same failed to register.

"Any appointments, Miss Olsen?" Grue asked briskly.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Ames of the Third National Bank will be here at eleven. James Kettering would like to lunch with you at the club. And a Miss Smith called. Said she'd call back."

"Smith....? I don't know a Miss Smith."

"She said you met her last night and told her to call," Miss Olsen explained.

"What kind of idiocy is this?" Grue's voice was tight. "I was home last night, went to bed shortly before midnight—" His voice faded off in sudden remembrance of what his wife had said. His tone was more normal when he spoke again: "When Miss Smith calls tell her she was mistaken. That's all."

But it wasn't all, he thought as he went to his desk. The sunlight streaming in made shadow play on the fine graining of the wall's red-wood panelling and as Grue came close to his desk he paused as something caught his eye.

He would have sworn he was looking at brush strokes, the first in the beginning of a painting. They were blurred, indistinct, yet he would have sworn to it. He put out his hand to touch the panel, then jerked it back as though he feared what his fingers might touch.

The buzzer on his private intercom switch sounded. He reached over, flicked the switch and Miss Olsen's voice came on:

"Your brother is here to see you, sir."

"Send him in," Grue said. He slid in behind the desk and leaned far back in the leathered chair.

The two men stared silently at each other. At first glance there seemed small resemblance between the two until you saw that their eyes were the same strange color, their noses similarly straight and long, with an odd flaring of the nostrils, their chins heavy and firm. There the resemblance ended.

Tom Grue was slender, making him appear taller than he actually was. Gideon was as tall, but more stocky, thicker of chest. Where Tom's mouth curved in a sensitive humor-loving line, his brother's lips were a thin line.

They did not shake hands.

"How is Charlotte?" Tom asked.

"Why is Charlotte the first thing you ask about?" Gideon asked.

Tom tried to side step. "New rule? No questions about Charlotte?"

"I made a mistake ten years ago," Gideon spoke softly. "Maybe it's not too late to rectify it. Why don't you let me take care of Charlotte? She's *my* wife."

Tom's eyes narrowed slightly at

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the words. He hated arguments. He wondered at the other's sudden temper. "Gid. I didn't come here to talk about Charlotte. Suppose we drop it."

"When *I'm* ready. You still love her don't you?"

There it was. No more retreating, no more hiding. "Yes. Not that it matters. She's *your* wife. You just told me so."

"And I'm going to *keep* telling you so. Just as I told *her* this morning. How do you like that?"

"I don't! Nor is there much I can do about it. When she married you *our* life ended. But you're not the man to believe that. Not you. You've got to eat yourself up. Well, enjoy your meal."

GIDEON leaned forward and placed his arms on the desk top. "Y'know. I'm going to tell you something I've hid from myself for ten years. She loves you, never stopped loving you. But I've got her. Nice and legal. And I'm going to keep her."

The slow, almost gentle words floated up at Tom. They pressed in on him, repeating themselves again and again in his mind. He moistened his lips with a suddenly thick tongue.

"You like things nice and legal, don't you? You always have. We're twins. Not legally though. I came fifteen minutes later. So you got the estate and the money and I got an art school education. Charlotte and I were in love. Then you met her and decided you wanted her. It was all nice and legal, wasn't it? Her father using trust money that wasn't his; a small matter of the balance of a lifetime in jail. It was your bank. A simple matter to replace the money for the old man, if he did as you ordered. There was no alternative for Charlotte. Jail would mean death for her father. So she married you. All right! She married you, and still loves me. Eat that!"

Gideon sighed and leaned back again. "I wonder how many times you and she have met before you wormed that out of her?"

"You won't believe this I'm sure. But she has kept her bargain, no matter how bitter it's been. I learned what happened the morning of the day you married her. I tried to make her change her mind. She wouldn't. Just one thing, Gideon. You've never touched her in anger. Keep it that way!"

"How intimate. She tells you everything. Even the kind of touch I have. Does she tell you— All right! Let's drop it. You came here for something. Money, I'm sure. Right?"

"Yes I did," Tom said. "I was told that no money, no exhibition. It's my big chance. So I came to my elder brother to ask for a loan. Only I've changed my mind. You know what you can do with the money. I'll manage to get the five hundred I need. Someplace, somehow...."

Gideon Grue's eyes blazed in hate as the door closed. Tom had hit the nail on the head. Charlotte was a wife in name only. Ten years of desiring, ten years of living with a woman who hated you, accepted your caresses as part of her duty, who never gave herself willingly....

He became aware of a buzzing sound and switched the set on. His secretary's voice came in:

"Miss Smith called back, and she isn't a lady. She said you weren't a gentleman, either. Not after the promises you made to her last night. But I don't think she'll bother you again. And Mr. Ames is here, sir—"

"Send him in, Miss Olsen. And remember. No more about Miss Smith."

Gideon Grue shook hands with the man who had just concluded a pact

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with him, making Gideon the financial czar of the city, then ushered him out. The strong cruel face settled into lines of content. His eyes looked into distances he had imagined in his youth, and knew they were much closer than he had ever hoped for. Grue would soon be a factor to contend with in national financial circles. He sighed in deep satisfaction and returned to the desk. But the desire to work had left him. He looked at his watch, saw that it was time for lunch and decided to call Charlotte and tell her he would go to the Sloans with her.

She wasn't in; the maid said she had gone to the Associated Galleries, but would be back shortly. *Poor Charlotte,* he thought as he replaced the receiver. *Gone to see her Tom and he not there to meet her.* He laughed harshly and moved to the door.

Miss Olsen was just turning away from the phone.

"—Mr. Grue," she stopped him. "Your father-in-law just called. The third one. Said he *must* see you. That he would be here at three, and that he wouldn't take no for an answer."

He'll take no and like it, Grue said to himself. *I'm fed up with his whining.* Aloud he said: "If I have time. However I may not be back. There's nothing of importance on the schedule this afternoon. If I decided to return it will be *after three.*"

GAY KETTERING was the largest insurance broker in the city. Grue did not care much for the man. Kettering loved to drink and thought himself a blade with the women although his bad taste in them was notorious. But Grue made use of Kettering on occasion and so tolerated the lunches they shared once in a while.

As usual Kettering was drinking his lunch. The well-barbered face was already showing signs of many cocktails and the eyes were blood-shot and strained. He saw Grue and called to him:

"Old hide-in-a-corner Grue. This way."

Grue erased the look of distaste from his features, shook hands with a semblance of cordiality, refused the offer of a drink and ordered a light lunch. Kettering plunged immediately into what was obviously the only thing on his mind:

"When I saw you last night, and where and with what, I wished I had brought a camera along."

Grue felt as though all the air had been let out of the room. A fine beading of sweat lined his forehead. All he could think was: *Then it's true. I did go out. With a Miss Smith. I don't remember, though. I don't remember . . . .*

"Of course it isn't for me to choose a man's playmates," Kettering was saying. "But really, old man. People like us sometimes go to spots like the Hung Goose just for the kick. That girl; she was from pigland."

The rest of the lunch was nightmarish. Kettering wanted to enjoy the gossip to the full, and more, wanted to get a confession from Grue. It finally became too much for Grue. Inventing an excuse he left the table hurriedly. He had to get some air. He had to get away from this old man who loved young things. . . .

GRUE STOOD before the entrance to the club, hesitant, debating with himself what course to follow. If he were becoming a victim of amnesia then surely there was a remedy, a doctor to whom he might go without anyone being the wiser. Suddenly he knew he had to talk to Charlotte about last night. She would know. At least something. What he might have said, a clue he could track down. . . .

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He had dismissed his chauffeur for the day and had driven to the club himself. He told the doorman to get his car, got in and drove to the town house they used during the winter months.

His wife was not home. But his wait was not long. He had left the bedroom door open and could hear her voice, singing the words of a popular ballad heard frequently on the radio. Abruptly the reason that had brought him home no longer mattered.

Charlotte never sang; she never moved with light tripping steps as she did now. Why now? The answer was easy. She had seen Tom!

Her bright smile faded at sight of him sitting on the bed.

"What are you doing here?" she asked. He caught the edge of fear in her voice.

He didn't answer but stepped forward swiftly and grabbed her wrists, dragging her to him. Reason exploded in a furious burst of anger:

"Where the hell have you been? You sound so damned gay. Was he more loving than I, younger, more handsome? Maybe a rising artist, eh? But you wouldn't be seeing Tom on the sly, would you? Not much, you slut!"

Her face broke into sudden bits of pain and terror. "You're hurting me—"

"Hurt you, damn you! I'll kill you! Where were you?"

"To the-the Associated Galleries." She stumbled over the words. "I wanted to see Tom's exhibit, since you refused to go."

"To see Tom, you mean!"

She found strength suddenly, and jerked free. "No," her voice was controlled now, calm, emotionless again. "I didn't go to see Tom. But even if I had, is there any reason for this? Do you accuse me of being untrue—"

He remembered then that Tom had been to see him. There was no exhibit. She had lied. It was all in the open now! Well, he had always suspected them. Now he *knew*. Good. He knew how to make her pay for her indiscretion. There were so many ways.... He shoved her roughly from him and strode angrily from the room.

Charlotte sank slowly to the bed, one hand pressed close against her mouth. Terror lay bright in her eyes. She knew the beast she had aroused. But Grue was mistaken. She hadn't seen Tom. She had called him on learning there would be no exhibit. As always, the bright sound of his voice thrilled her, and though they spoke in generalities, just hearing him stirred her deeply. That was why she had been singing, why her steps had been so light. Now....

MISS OLSEN looked up in surprise, forgot the pleasantry she was about to utter and merely said:

"Mr. Keever is in your office, sir. He said he had met you and you told him to wait outside."

"Good! I want to see him. Very much so."

She stared at him in bewilderment at his broad back as he entered his office. There had been such a strange look in his eyes, such a wild look....

Edward Keever was a large man, massive despite his years, with strong features and a clever mind. Too clever at times. Sometimes that cleverness betrayed him into actions beyond his control, into the very things which had placed him in Grue's power. He was sitting on the davenport, his body bent forward, his head bowed. His hands clasped and unclasped as if in spasm. He looked up at the sound of the door's opening with a look that was both malignant and frightened.

Grue passed him without a word,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

started to get behind the desk and stopped, mouth agape, eyes staring wildly. The brushmarks on the wall had become more distinct, and a pattern was beginning to take shape.

"Gideon," Keever's voice reached him as from a distance. "I've come to you for help. I know. I promised not to get mixed up in any more of those deals but— Gideon! What's wrong?"

The other turned a blank face toward Keever. "Wha-what?" he mumbled.

"Is something wrong?" Keever asked again.

"No-no, nothing. Uh, what do you want?"

"I told you. I'm in a mess—"

"Mess? What do you mean?" awareness returned sharply to Grue. He saw Keever's fright, how badly shaken the other seemed to be.

"It's not my fault, Gideon. I swear it. I don't know how it happened."

Thunder pounded in Grue's ears. Or was it the sound of his heart's beat? Keever continued talking:

"—They found an heir, after all these years. The attorneys filed a writ of examination and I checked the account. It's short."

Of course it's short you old fool, Grue thought. *Where the hell did you think I got the money to replace that which you stole? Got to think! Get rid of the old man.*

"When does the writ go into effect?" Grue asked. He had regained control of himself.

"In the morning."

"That gives us a little time. Enough probably. All right. Go home. Go someplace. But stay out of my sight. I'll let you know what to say and do. Now get out."

"Miss Olsen," Grue was calm, sure, cold, "I'll want a State auditor to come down and look into an account. I think I have discovered a shortage. As quickly as is possible. You understand that this must go no further until the account has been checked."

He closed the switch on her reply. Keever's goose should be cooked by morning. He'd wait till then before telling Charlotte. It would be the first of several things he had in store for her. An idea came to him. He smiled at the thought that he was to become an actor shortly. He lifted the phone and dialed his home.

Charlotte answered.

"Charlotte," his voice was low, unsure. "I left you a while ago, angry, vengeful. I called you names, made accusations. I was wrong. I knew it then, I know it now. I've never begged. I'm," he paused and let strength come into his voice, "not the kind of man who begs. I was wrong. Terribly wrong. Just to say that then ask for forgiveness might be another's way of making amends. I'll make mine in my own way. Try to understand and if you can, forgive. About the Sloans' dinner, I'll be there. 'Bye, my dear."

She hadn't made a sound. But he knew his wife. She had her own ideas of right and wrong. He knew he had used the right words.

He looked at his watch. Two o'clock. He had thought it later. So much the better. The bank examiner should be in shortly; he knew how swiftly they worked. By evening the alarm should go out for the babbling old fool.... *Babbling old fool.* The thought filled him with swift unease. Keever might tell about the previous dereliction. And his name would be brought in. No! That wouldn't do at all. He had to get hold of the man.

Keever lived by himself in a two-room walkup apartment on the North Side. The old man had just arrived in time to take Grue's call. Keever answered the door.

"Be back in a second. Want to turn

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the gas off. Was making some coffee—"

Grue's mouth wore an odd smile of pleasureable anticipation as he followed the other into the kitchen. His gloved hands were clenched into balls of destruction....

THE CHIEF guard opened the door to Grue.

"The examiners are here, sir," he announced. "The head examiner is in Mr. Keever's office."

The chief examiner, a slender man whose faded auditor's eyes peered weakly behind gold-rimmed spectacles, turned at Grue's entry. "Aah. Mr. Grue— A bad business. You realize, of course, that a complete audit must be made now. I would say, offhand, however, that the Farnsworth account was the only one touched. Might have never been known were it not for the writ. Keever must have lost his head—"

"Why?"

"Had he asked around he would have discovered that the writ meant nothing. It was taken in anticipation of the court's affirming of the heir. A couple of months certainly would have passed. By the way. I notified the authorities. Keever should be picked up shortly."

"Ye-s," Grue turned away. "I feel sorry for the old man. He's my father-in-law—"

The examiner's eyes went wide, then narrowed in understanding. He turned slowly and went back to the work Grue had interrupted.

Miss Olsen was sitting tense and worried. For the first time he could remember, the crispness was gone from her blouse, and the suit seemed to reflect the tiredness of her body. She looked up and a small sob escaped her.

"Ooh, Mr. Grue! I was so worried. You left a little after two. It's past four now. They kept wanting to know where you'd gone. I didn't know what to say—"

"Since you didn't know, nothing," Grue said stiffly. Of a sudden the same feeling he had in the club while dining with Kettering, returned. As if all the air had been let out of the room.... Two hours. Where had he been? He had started off for somewhere, to see someone.... He looked down at the woman. She was staring at his right hand. He followed her glance. Encrusted blood covered several of the knuckles, and one of them was swelled to twice its normal size.

He jammed the hand quickly into his trouser pocket and stalked into his private office.

It was recognizable now. A grey sky shot with pale light. A darker grey wall. A platform and on it, like an accusing finger pointing to Heaven, a scaffold and a gibbet. The gibbit seemed to be waiting, as if soon its want would be filled....

A trace of spittle dribbled down Grue's chin. He wipe it away with a mechanical gesture. *Someone,* he thought, *someone was deliberately doing this.* Of a sudden he knew. Tom! It had to be.... He plunged across the desk top, jammed the switch down so hard it snapped off short and shouted: "Miss Olsen! I want you in here. This minute!"

She seemed terrified at his expression. She stood, one hand behind her holding the knob, her body bent slightly, her eyes wide.

"—Look around, Miss Olsen," Grue's lips kept twitching in an odd tic. "Do you see anything that is different? Anything new, strange?"

"No. No, sir."

"Uh, huh! You see nothing. As I expected. What time was my brother in—"

"Why—Why you saw him your-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self. This morning, sir."

It was almost a whisper: "You lie. You lie, damn you! He returned while I was out, didn't he?"

"No, sir!" her courage returned to chase the fright. "I don't like being called a liar. I said he didn't come back."

Grue smiled down at the woman. His lips made a smacking sound. "My brother is a charming person. So my wife tells me. She prides herself as an expert in such things. My brother has a way with women. Even women like you, Miss Olsen. Isn't it true he returned and asked to be let in? Didn't he, shall we say, pay with a caress, for your help?"

Suddenly the pudgy face dissolved into tears. She brought her hands up and put her face into them. Words spaced the broken sobs:

"No. No. He isn't like that. You have no right, no right... He wasn't here—"

"Ohh! Get out, you—fool! The lie's in your face."

She fled the room to the sanctuary of her private cubicle. He could hear the sounds of weeping and closed the door on it. He wanted to be alone now. *Something had to be done. There was no question she had seen the picture. Stubborn bitch! He could get around her, though. But no one else must see it.* He snapped his fingers. *Simple. A drape to cover it.*

He lifted the phone after finding the number he wanted in the business directory. Yes, the man who answered, said. They could come out immediately and do the work, since price was no object, and thank you—

THERE were two of them. Quiet men, working men in coveralls, men who knew their business and went swiftly about their job. A half hour and it was done. He looked at the drape with satisfied eyes. One other thing. This room must never be entered unless he were in it. A word to Miss Olsen, the return of *her* key, and a change of locks. Just like that. Tom would not finish *this* picture.

There was a knock on the door. He opened it and Miss Olsen, her cheeks stained with traces of tears, stood on the threshold.

"I-I'd like to leave early, sir. I don't feel well."

He lifted his hand to pat her shoulder and she shrank from the touch. "I'm sorry, Miss Olsen. This is terrible business—I guess we're all upset. Take tomorrow off. Come back refreshed."

She nodded wordlessly, turned and walked away.

He smiled, and after a minute, followed. The numbing feeling at the back of his head did not come until the gathering darkness embraced him....

* * *

The room was in darkness. He switched the light on automatically and walked into the bathroom. It seemed seconds later that Charlotte came in. Her face was pale and drawn. She watched the man for a moment, turned and went back to the bedroom and taking off the fur coat put it into her wardrobe. By the time she was done Gideon Grue had come out. There was a purplish bruise on his cheek. His trousers were smeared with paint.

He looked blankly at her and started to remove his trousers. "Paint," he mumbled. "Wonder how I smeared myself?"

"Gideon. This has to stop. The Sloans didn't ask any questions when you left without saying good-bye. But I could feel their eyes prying at me. Where were you? How did you get that bruise? The paint on your trousers—?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Grue straightened. "What time is it? What time did I leave the Sloans?"

"You came shortly after five. And left before six. Before dinner was served. Without a word of explanation. Why?"

"I don't want to talk about it now. Tomorrow. Time enough."

The phone rang and Charlotte took the extension. He couldn't make out what was said on the other end. He heard her say, "Yes. This is Mrs. Grue—That's right. Will-you-say-that again—"

He was too late to catch her as she fell to the floor in a faint.

He lifted the phone from the bed where it had dropped from her nerveless fingers and said: "This is Mr. Grue. What's wrong? Who is this?"

It was the police. They had found Keever, dead, a suicide. He had placed his head in the over door and turned on the gas jets. They had been trying to reach the Grues since shortly after five....

He called their doctor, hung up, and went to the maid's room. She was breathless and frightened but began to help him lift his wife to the bed. He told her to stay with Charlotte until the doctor arrived. He would be back shortly....

He took his clothes into another room, changed completely and left the house. He was not in a mood for the questions the doctor was certain to ask. Besides, he had to get hold of himself. A walk in the brisk autumn air might help. *So Keever had committed suicide. Now he was in the clear. They would never couple his name with the missing funds.* He almost forgot, and chuckled at the remembrance. Charlotte and Tom. He would wait until morning before telling her. Poor girl. Let her get some sleep first.

There was still Tom though. And that damned painting. What was behind it? What did it mean? Yes. There was still Tom. Well, he would make Tom tell even if he had to choke it out of him....

He looked up and started in surprise. He hadn't realized how far he had walked. Another few blocks and he would be at the bank. And suddenly a wild desire possessed him. *He had to see the picture again!*

THIS time it was the chief night guard who let him in.

"Examiners still here, Lang?" Grue asked.

"No, sir. Left an hour ago."

"Good. I didn't want to be disturbed. Will you see to it, please?"

The guard nodded. Grue walked slowly, with measured step to his offices. He stood for a long moment in the darkness of his inner office. Every nerve quivered, his hands were shaking. The tremors passed after a while and Grue flipped the light switch.

The drapes lay in neat folds across that part of the wall. They blended so well with the panelling they seemed part of the wall. He had asked for the color. He moved hesitantly forward, touched the drawstring, and pulled his hand away quickly. He had seen the swollen knuckle, and the cuts, still open. He remembered washing it shortly after he came to the Sloans. There wasn't much else he remembered of his stay.

Once more his hand came up. And this time he did not draw it away. The drapes parted with a rasping sound. His breath whistled in his throat in terror. The picture was now complete! A man hung from the gibbet. There was a noose about his throat. Then he looked closer and saw that the head of the figure was faceless.

So there's more. Not much. Just a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

face. He shuddered violently and sought the chair behind the desk. He knew one thing. He had to stay till morning.

Quite suddenly he was tired. So damned tired. He had to sleep. *If only the whip slashing at his brain would let up. The damned thing was driving him crazy....*

Gideon Grue's head fell forward to the desk top. He slept.

THERE were voices in the hall. He could hear them. Odd how clear they were. He lifted his head and a thread of cottony saliva dripped from the corner of his mouth. An uncontrollable twitch affected one side of his face. The other was fixed in a horrible expression. As he listened he slipped the gun from the drawer and held it loosely in his palm.

"—He must have thought he'd killed me," a man was talking. It sounded like Tom's voice. But that was impossible. Gideon knew, with a dreadful certainty that Tom was dead. He had killed Tom only a short time before. "—He smacked my skull on the desk and all the lights went out for me. I came to and found my face covered with something sticky. Paint. Red paint. He saw the paint and probably thought it was blood. He's gone crazy, Lieutenant. He said he was going to kill Charlotte too, after me. First her father—" Tom sounded hysterical.

"Easy now, Mr. Grue," a hoarse voice cautioned.

Gideon Grue tried to laugh but couldn't. They thought he was out there...

A new voice sounded. Miss Olsen's: "His hand was all cut up around the knuckles. I saw it before he shoved the hand into his pocket. I didn't understand then."

What was there to understand? He must have had a fight with someone. That was all....

The hoarse voice came in: "Grue couldn't have known Keever had a conscience. He left it in a letter in his private box here in the bank. It was fairly easy after that. And then we found that Keever had a broken jaw. It was possible though not probable that he could have broken his jaw before he killed himself. That theory fell apart when we found the pot of coffee on the stove, and the cup, still with dregs in it on the floor. A couple of other things, like Miss Olsen's story, your arrival, and we've got our man."

Now what were they talking about? Keever had killed himself. He had heard it from the police themselves....

"I think we'll go in now, boys," the Lieutenant said. "Better stand back out of the way, folks. All right. Break it in."

Gideon Grue dragged himself away from the desk. He had to see the picture once more. Yes, now it was complete. The face had been put in. His own face. The grin that appeared on his lips was an idiot's, and now the grey saliva dripped in a steady stream from one corner of his mouth.

The gun sounded once, a terrifying explosive crack. And after, the fall of the body....

* * *

"Why did he cover the panelling with this drape?" Tom asked. He was visibly shaken. He kept his eyes away from the grey and red mess on the carpet.

"I don't know," Miss Olsen said. "He insisted I let you in while he was gone."

Tom stepped forward and rubbed his hand across the fine redwood panelling, so warm, so beautifully textured, so blank....

THE END

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

UNDERGROUND BOILER

★ By RAMSEY SINCLAIR ★

THOSE WHO see the handwriting on the wall know that is purely a matter of time before the time-honored process of mining coal disappears. Of course some will always be mined for the coke necessary for steel plants and the coal tar necessary for chemical plants. But the future of coal lies in the ground!

There have been many descriptions of the pilot plant techniques used here and abroad in which a hole is drilled a coal field, a bomb and oxygen put into the hole and the resulting gasses collected from the partial combustion removed and used directly. This practice is becoming more and more common since it is so efficient, burning the coal right in the ground and taking away the gasses and the heat instead of digging it out and doing the same thing.

A new wrinkle has been added. A Swedish technician has invented the method of placing pipes in the burning coal bed and circulating water in these pipes thus using the whole coal field as a gigantic hot water and steam plant. How valuable this method is remains to be seen. But one thing is certain, an ever-diminishing amount of coal will be mined directly to be burned. The fuels of the immediate future (until atomic power is developed on a wide scale) will be gas and oil, both of which can and will be made from the enormous reserves of coal found everywhere.

The signs of the times are found in examining the contemplated electric power plants. Almost all new ones are equipped to switch from coal to oil if necessary—or gas. Yes, King Coal, the black diamond will be with us for a long, long time, but he's going to be converted into a ghost of his former self. We'd sooner turn a valve, than lift a shovelful of coal!

THE VENUSIAN "COLLISION"

★ By J. R. MARKS ★

THE APPEARANCE of a new book by Dr. Velilovsky, titled, *Worlds In Collision*, has set the scientific world agog and rocked scientists themselves, back on their heels—but not in a favorable way!

Velikovsky maintains that about fifteen hundred years B. C. a giant comet ventured into the Solar System, passing very close to Earth. Some fifty odd years later this same "comet" returned to the System again passing near the Earth, this time causing the *Earth to stand still!* Later on this comet became the planet Venus! Velikovsky documents this remarkable theory with a bewildering array of "evidence" extracted from legend, mythology, Biblical references, and the writings of ancient peoples.

Perfectly straight-faced this offering has been launched and given wide audience. The result is that astronomy is up in arms and strong scientists are fainting in droves. That such a theory can even be considered much less so widely distributed to an audience is a sad commentary on the general scientific attitude.

Realizing the seriousness of the situation, a number of legitimate astronomers have publicly explained the ridiculousness of the theory and pointed out how the Earth could not be stopped save by actual impact, a condition which would have destroyed it!

Unfortunately there will be many who will devour the weird idea vigorously and promote it strongly. The only proper thing a rational person can do is to shrug his shoulders and dismiss it as "one of those ideas." The only sad thing is that so many people who have no scientific background, will be inclined to give the preposterous suggestion credence.

Sorry, Velikovsky, we're not that stupid...

In direct contrast to Velikovsky's *silly* fantasy, is a remarkable criticism of science called, "Science Is A Sacred Cow." This book written by a prominent chemist proceeds to give the scientific attitude as sound a drubbing as it's received in a long long time. And he does it with wit and discernment, coolly dissecting some fond beliefs and thoroughly subjecting the priestcraft of science to a verbal lashing.

Scientists, he says, have come to regard themselves as oracles and minor gods, whose every pronouncement is law, be they in politics, science, religion, art or what have you, and furthermore, they reiterate, the scientific method is a sure cure for all the ills of the world! Rubbish, the chemist affirms. The scientific method is good and valid, *within its sphere*—no farther. Human beings are not subject to the dissecting room technique and all the ponderous phrases of the so-called "social" and "biological" sciences are the pronouncements of idiots. He really goes to town—but reasonably, after the manner of a thinking man.

What a contrast between these two blows against science!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

READER'S PAGE

THEORETICALLY IMPOSSIBLE

Sir:

In no way do I wish to sling mud upon Craig Browning's writing ability. I thoroughly enjoy his writing, but in your May issue of FA, in Mr. Browning's story titled "Spawn of Darkness", there was a slight technical discrepancy that may be of interest to you and perhaps to some of your readers.

On page 108, second column, fourth paragraph, second line, Mr. Browning wrote, quote: "two electrons met in head-on flight, at a relative speed almost twice that of light", unquote.

Theoretically, that's impossible. In my stilted fashion I'll attempt to prove it.

First: Electrons may be said to be negative charges of electricity and *two like charges tend to repel each other.*

Second: By a thorough analysis of Coulomb's law, further proof will be found.

$$F \text{ equals } K \frac{Q_1 \quad Q_2}{r^2}$$

Let

F equal the attracting or repulsing force in Dynes.

r equal the distance between two particles (electrons in this instance) in centimeters.

K equal a constant of proportionality, and for free space, is taken to have the value of unity (1).

Q_1 and Q_2 equal the charges on the two particles under test.

If the two charges are *positive* or *negative,* their product is *positive* as is therefore F. A *positive* force is taken as one of *repulsion.* The electron has a charge, roughly, equalling; e equals (-1) x 4.770 x 10^{-10} statcoulombs. This value may be substituted for Q_1 and for Q_2. Thus an examination of coulomb's formula will show that as "r" decreases, the repulsive force will greatly increase.

The resulting repulsive force in dynes will not seem great, but when account is taken of the exceedingly small mass of these charges, the force is enormous in comparison. This would prevent a head-on collision...theoretically.

Third: Consider Einstein's famous law enunciated in 1905, stating that energy can be converted into mass and mass into energy.

$$M \text{ equals } W/C^2$$

Let

M equal the mass in grams

W equal the energy in ergs that is equivalent to M

C^2 equals the velocity of light (3×10^{10} cm/sec)

Now in Mr. Browning's hypothesis, each electron was traveling at or over the speed of light. Thus the Kinetic Energy in each of the particles would be very high. (Found with K.E. equals $(\frac{1}{2})m V^2$; where "m" is the mass (assumed constant) and "V" is the velocity.) Now with Einstein's theory in mind, the mass of the electrons would be greatly increased. But the charge found on these particles is directly proportional to the mass; so, if the mass of the two electrons is increased, so will the repulsive force in Dynes...therefore, the electrons still wouldn't meet, even with their increased mass.

If one electron was stationary and the other moving at or over the speed of light, then the cataclysm described in the story would be highly probably...otherwise, theoretically *impossible.*

My train of thought and theorizing probably contains as many loopholes as a moth-eaten rag, but it was an attempt anyhow. I would like to know if there is any contradictory evidence concerning the above.

Your magazine has afforded me many hours of enjoyable reading. Keep up the good work.

Robert Poorman
326 E. Chestnut St.
Lancaster, Pa.

Your criticism of Mr. Browning's technical data is quite interesting. We're going to let Mr. Browning reply in detail in this section next month.....Ed.

ST. REYNARD RING THE BELL!

Dear Sir:

Many thanks for publishing my letter and your very fine acknowledgment of it in the May issue. It has left me with a very warm and pleasant feeling.

If possible, will you please print this letter, as I would like to express my thanks to the many organizations and business places who have written to me as a result

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the letter you published. I would like to have the time to write to them all personally to thank them for their interest, but it would be impossible. It is as much impossible to single out any one or few which I could answer as it would only slight the rest. However, as a science-fiction and fantasy-fiction reader of some thirty-two years, starting with the old ELECTRICAL EXPERIMENTER, I can appreciate the fact that there are so many people who have come to enjoy this type of reading.

It may be of interest to you, Mr. Hamling, that of all the various magazines in the same class as yours, your publication is the only one to which I have ever written. This fact being due to Geoff St. Reynard. Of all the writers who have been writing science fiction and fantasy, he alone has had enough impact on my sensibilities to make me want to sit up and cheer for his work. He has rung the bell again with his "Elementals of Jedar" in the May issue. In all my wide and varied experience with fantasy and science fiction I have not come across the type of plot which he has used in "Elementals". It seems that he comes up with something new in every story he writes.

For the rest of the May issue, I would place the other stories as follows: 2) "Fido" by Mack Reynolds 3) "The Remarkable Flirgleflip" by William Tenn 4) "Vanguard of the Lost" by John D. MacDonald 5) "The Mental Assassins" by Gregg Conrad 6) "Spawn of Darkness" by Craig Browning 7) "Birds of a Feather" by Lester Barclay 8) "The Trumpet" by J. J. Allerton.

Again many thanks to you and to all the others who have sent communications to me.

William E. Davies
6901 Marlow Avenue
Bell Gardens, Cal.

You'll be interested in knowing, Bill, that St. Reynard is completing a cover story for us and you'll be seeing it in an early issue .....Ed.

CONCERNING AN EDITORIAL...

Dear Editor:

I notice in the latest FANTASTIC ADVENTURES what I take as an answer to my last letter—on your editorial page. You mention your arguments against the use of reprints.

On a great many points I still disagree with your stand. You state that reprint magazines seldom last long. I cite you the case of FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES and FANTASTIC NOVELS. They have been very successful. And now STANDARD MAGAZINES have brought out two more.

You say the stories do not match up to present standards. Here, again, I disagree. Many of the old stories are as good as they ever were—and better than much of the modern stuff. I will admit that many of the books being published now are trash, but still there are many science-fiction books coming out which are really fine—even though they are old stories. They are selling well and we dyed-in-the-wool fans are enjoying them thoroughly. They are not antiques; they are great stories. I have re-read some of the old yarns of Smith, Campbell, Verrill, Breuer, Williamson, Meek, Cloukey, Tanner, Taine, and others and for my money, they beat anything you're printing now by a country mile. Of course, your market now is not to the real fan and science-fiction enthusiast, but to the reader who wants adventure and juvenile writing, with no ideas to worry about understanding in the stories. But I cannot feel that your stories are so good that you couldn't reprint. Lest I be too unkind, though, I hasten to say that the new editorship may be bringing about a change. I haven't been reading your mags regularly enough to say as yet, but at least you got a novel by Sturgeon and that's an achievement in itself.

You say the use of reprints is too hard on present-day authors. They need the money for the use of new stories. Again your argument doesn't hold water when for years a half dozen authors have pen-named practically your entire table of contents. There are so many mags on the market now that there just aren't enough good authors and good stories to go around. The other editors admit that. Many mediocre stories are being accepted, simply because there aren't enough good ones. So the authors who have anything good to say will still make enough. The use of reprints will only affect the hacks, who would do much better to take more time and turn out fewer stories.

In your files you have some great old stories. Frankly, I think your mags are slipping and these classics might be just the shot in the arm to bring them up again. If not a reprint magazine, how about Ziff-Davis pocket-books? Or how about releasing the copyrights to other publishers? I think the arguments for will stand up better than those against.

Donald V. Allgeier
1851 Gerrard Avenue
Columbus 12, Ohio

First of all, we'd like to say that if you will read our editorial again you will find that we did not state that reprint magazines seldom last long. We stated: "It has been proven, through experience, that few reprint publications last for any period of time." Naturally we are aware of the ones you mention. But a great majority of reprint magazines have folded in the past. As to the stories measuring up to some of the present-day products, it is true that you can find any number of fine yarns in issues published decades ago. But similarly, you will find that the most of them are out-dated. They are inclined to be windy, and in too many cases, merely travelogue incidents. Today's story is a neatly plotted fast moving work. In keeping with the Times.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Your opinion as to the slant of our market is correct in one sense, and false in another. It so happens that the "juvenile" reader you infer is such only in his span of years. If you will examine the huge organized following that is fandom you will find that a great number of the "fans" are youthful. But as far as their intelligence goes, there brother, we draw the line. A science-fiction fan is as smart and discerning a reader as you will find anywhere. And what's more important, he's up on his science. You can't put across a false mathematical theory, for example, and fool a fan.

We also think you've got a misconception about what the real fan wants. The science-fiction enthusiast wants adventure —after all, isn't that what a story entails? As to juvenile writing, what about recent issues of FA? Would you classify Sturgeon, Myers, St. Reynard, Reynolds, Tenn, Phillips, etc. as amateurs? And what about Fritz Leiber's great novel last month?

As to the authors, a reprint magazine never did anything but hurt a writer. It constitutes one less market for him.

We don't agree with you that our magazines are slipping. To the contrary, we feel they are on a steadily increasing upgrade that will set a pattern for the rest of the field. We intend to prove this to you—and we won't have to resort to dusty files to do it!.....Ed.

LESS PROPAGANDA

Dear Mr. Hamling:

Shades of Joe Kennedy! First Rog Phillips writes a book about Lin Carter and now Mack Reynolds casts Les Cole as the purloined hero of "Fido". I can see how the writers might pull the names of some of the more obscure fans out of their subconscious to dub their characters, but surely they never 'forgot' who Lin and Les were. But what happened to Es Cole? Any fan knows that just any old female wouldn't satisfy Les, if he were still separated from Es. That might be a kind of nice life, though. Provided your owner saw to it that your s-f correspondence got mailed regularly.

The reason you haven't heard from me since is that the last two issues were too near the low quality level of the old FA to be worth commenting on. I can't see any purpose in writing a letter, if you have to dig out ROGET'S THESAURUS to find ninety-nine different ways of saying "lousy". However, this issue was up again. Not up to the Sturgeon level, it's true, but still definitely encouraging.

"The Mental Assassins" was really tragic in that its possibilities were so great, and the end result so disappointing. Even worse, the author left all sorts of loose ends hanging out. I could list a few but I have other things to say in this letter.

Glad to see you've snagged MacDonald, in addition to Sturgeon and Temple. Now, how about going after Brown, Bradbury, and—do I dare to hope for Van Vogt and Heinlein?

"Vanguard of the Lost" wasn't top-notch MacDonald but he used insurance by making one of the chief characters a fan. We always like to read about ourselves. However, Mac, didn't you read THE WRITER'S DIGEST expose which clearly states that none of the fans have good figures? Now how do you reconcile that with the description of your oh-so-luscious heroine? Of course, I'll admit the only femme fan I ever met personally didn't impress me that way, but then who am I to contradict a New York publisher?

Tenn's story would have been the best in the issue if he had used just a little less double-talk. As it is I don't know which story rates highest. Well, after looking over the contents page, I guess even with the double-talk Tenn still rates tops, so toss him one flirgleflip as a reward.

Incidentally, could we have a little less of this "your favorite magazine" propaganda. If either AMAZING or FANTASTIC rates high enough with the fans to hold that position, don't worry about it, they'll write in and tell you. Then you can print their letters of praise rather than those little asides from the editor which give the reader the uncomfortable feeling someone's trying to sell him a bill of goods. I think almost all the fans will admit that both magazines have made tremendous strides, but many such as myself, though reading your magazine and enjoying much of it, still consider you have a long way to go before you can hold that high a position in our esteem.

Yours for better stories and less propaganda.

Vernon L. McCain
c/o Western Union
Payette, Idaho

When we speak of FA as "your favorite magazine" we are only voicing the opinion of the majority of our readers. We don't consider it propaganda under such circumstances. As to the stories, just keep your eye on coming issues!.....Ed.

PRIZES FOR LETTERS?

Sirs:

The new size of the "Reader's Page" noted with enthusiasm. A mag without a letter column is "fanishly" dead. A mag with a one-pager isn't much better off. So keep the present size, or enlarge it, if possible.

I'm also glad to see that you're still getting the top-flight authors. All of your stories should be by authors of the caliber of Tenn and MacDonald.

I rate "The Remarkable Flirgleflip" as the issue's best story. Despite the fact that the humor was more than a trifle forced in places, the story was well-written and funny.

Second comes "Elementals of Jedar". St. Reynard is a fine writer, but tends to go off on the corny side. I'd like to see a sequel to "The Usurpers" by him.

MacDonald, one of my favorites, places

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a rather weak third. I'm always a bit leery of stories with s-f writers as heroes. The idea was good, though, and MacDonald has never written an uninteresting story. If only he knew how to tack on an ending!

The rest of the issue was rather uninteresting. All except your editorial. Congrats. No reprints please!

The cover, tho no doubt appealing to the sex lovers and sadists among us, was an unwelcome addition to science-fiction's already overstocked Hall of Undressed Females. All kidding aside, I'm getting sick and tired of having to hide the covers of the mags I read. AS seems to have gotten out of this. Why can't FA?

The inside illustrations are dull and unattractive. What, oh what has happened to Finlay? And don't give me anything about deros!

Here you have one reader who is not very overjoyed at the return of Toffee. Toffee is one of the pulpiest characters fantasy ever gave birth to.

There is a s-f mag which gives originals as prizes for the three best letters. Why doesn't FA do that?

Morton D. Paley
1455 Townsend Ave.
New York 52, N.Y.

Your suggestion about giving illos for top letters is interesting. The only big question is, how would the letters be judged? How about the rest of you readers letting us know what you think about this idea? .....Ed.

HE'S HEPPED UP!

Dear Editor:

Often during my short but avid dabble into science-fiction fandom I have read letters which began with something similar to this: "I am writing this letter to congratulate you on procuring a real classic of stf for the lead story in your January issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. It was truly one of the best stories I have ever read."

In my mental comment on these letters I have always said, "Bunk! How could anybody be so hepped up over a story that they decide to write the editor of this mag, telling him how excited they are about it.

Now I know how some of those fans felt.

Of course I would have written you a letter regardless of whether or not you had featured a story called "The Mental Assassins" in the May issue. But that story sure is helping me with this letter.

Though somewhat confusing, it was one of the best novelettes I've ever read. Sad stories are always good, and lots of stories with happy endings are too. But "The Mental Assassins" combined both these type endings. The ending was neither sad nor happy or, you might say, it was both sad and happy.

Wonder what would have happened to the children born in the dream world.

I like covers which symbolize stories better than those which depict actual scenes. But, as far as I can see, the cover of this (the May) issue, does neither. I can't remember anything about a luscious creature being caught in the grasp of a giant orchid-like flower. If there was such a scene or implication, I certainly didn't see it. The cover was good though. I don't mind cover girls as long as they're not brazenly provocative.

The other good stories in this issue are: "Vanguard of the Lost"; "The Remarkable Flirgleflip"; and "Spawn of Darkness". Strangely and unusually there was no poor story in this issue. All the stories were either fair or good.

Just keep the mag this good and you'll be well out of "the slump".

Tom Covington
315 Dawson Street
Wilmington, N.C.

We're glad you liked the lead story so well, Tom. And as to that word "slump", you can eliminate if from your vocabulary —we guarantee it!.....Ed.

I—MY—ME—HEY!

Dear Editor:

You were so nice to I as to publish my letter that me decided to be nice(?) to thee and send another one. If you don't publish it, send me $2.00, or I'll send another one. If I do that, it'll change the policy of your mag from fantasy to horror.

To continue, the dear old May issue of dear old FA finally rolled into dear old San Francisco. That makes a total of three deros. Awful, isn't it? (The deros, not the letter.)

I grabbed the mag and opened it, not looking at the cover. Inside were such names as John D. MacDonald, Geoff St. Reynard (R. W. Krepps), and William Tenn.

I realize you had Krepps before, but it was a welcome sight to see Tenn's and MacDonald's names.

The cover was okay, but I was constantly avoiding friends. Let's have more of Blumenfield, but not on the same line as this cover is.

I'm glad to see you using Sharp and MacCauley. How about another cover from the latter? I can't forget the one he did for "Daughter of Genghis Khan", back in January '42.

Well, it seems as if you've carried out my suggestions. You've gotten St. Reynard to write another story. You've gotten Myers to write another Toffee story—a novel, no less! You didn't get Dick Casey back, but then, he's dead. Jones has been doing most of your (and AMAZING'S) covers lately. Kohn did one for AS. Swiatek has appeared frequently on the inside, though not on the cover. You've gotten new authors.

When I said new authors, I meant authors that had been writing for other mags. You got new ones *and* authors who have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been writing for other mags. Thanks.

I hear you were going to get Dwight V. Swain to write some stories for you. Has he already had some published under pennames, such as the current Gregg Conrad or Mack Reynolds? If not, put him to work, man.

Where is the novel by Lester del Rey? I'm waiting with bated breath.

In this issue, I've read only two of the stories, those being by Tenn and Krepps. Both are very good. I have read all the Krepps stf—fantasy stories I have,—and all but one of Tenn's, which I intend to read soon.

I can hardly wait for the new Toffee story. Wish I had a time machine, so I could travel into the future and buy it.

Terry Carr
134 Cambridge Street
San Francisco, Cal.

You've been so nice to we that us will be nice to thee—too! But seriously, you will find many more top stories by top writers —and new writers in future issues of your favorite magazine (there, we said it again)! Dwight Swain has not been writing lately—much to our sorrow—and yours. But say, Terry, Mack Reynolds won't like what you said about him! As to Les del Rey, we're still waiting for the promised story—to the point where we've almost stopped breathing! How about it, Les, is that fair? .....Ed.

ONE FINE ISSUE

Dear Sir:

Your May issue was as fine a copy as you have ever put out. "The Mental Assassins" was a very good story. Let's have more of Conrad. The rest of the issue ran fairly regular. All that is, except "Spawn of Darkness" which was far better than the usual Browning.

I would like to find some person with "The New Adam", and Ralph 124C41 for sale. I also want any copies of COMET, COSMIC, MIRACLE, MARVEL, STRANGE, MAGIC CARPET, GHOST, or the AMAZING annual for sale.

Roger Nelson
627 Robinson
San Diego 3, Cal.

Thanks for the kind words about the May issue, Rog. And we'll bet you get a lot of replies to your request.....Ed.

MAN, THAT COVER!

Sirs:

Well, now that you've quit clowning around with odd-looking printing-type and too-thick paper and one thing and another, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is getting good again. You'll have to go some to keep having issues as good as this May one, though. Let us consider the cover first. What line! What color! What composition! What a pair of—er, in short, what a babe! My girl friend got peeved. She said, "You gonna read that magazine, or are you gonna sit there with a silly grin on your face and look at the cover!" Well, let us hope that that symbolic floral BEM doesn't finish her off and that she survives, with her drafty bra and her cute little green silk shorts not too badly torn, to grace another cover.

Now as to the stories. "The Mental Assassins" was the best, of course. Say, I wonder....instead of being a handsome bucko, maybe *I'm* all cut up. Still, as it's impossible to tell which is the realer reality, dreaming, or waking, guess I will not bother to worry about it. "Spawn of Darkness" and "Vanguard of the Lost" I would call a dead-heat for place, with show-money going to "The Remarkable Flirgleflip", followed by "Fido" and "Elementals of Jedar". "The Trumpet" and "Birds of a Feather" are ringers.

Well, let's see. I liked the "Fido" illustration best. I don't particularly care for the fiction-type fillers. The rest of the magazine is fiction. Let's have some late news of research or something for a filler once in a while.

You know, after the first few you wouldn't mind it, I mean, you got lots spare time—you could get a pair of good sharp scissors, take the edition home and trim the edges—you wouldn't need to gild them—the readers are not *that* particular.

Guess I better stop before I land in the wastebasket.

Ralph Bailey
354 West 56 Street
New York 19, N.Y.

Come, come, Ralph, there isn't a wastebasket anywhere near the Reader's Page. What a horrible thought!.....Ed.

OH, FOR THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Dear Sirs:

I suppose this letter will find its way to your wastebaskets without even being read, but I am writing it anyway. It does not concern any one of your stories but specifically the editorial in your May issue. I heartily disagree with Mr. Hamling's entire viewpoint on the situation. Maybe these questions will make him reconsider a bit. (1) Should the immortal paintings of Rembrandt, Van Gogh or De Vinci be completely forgotten in preference to so-called "futuristic" art? (2) Should the immortal writings of Dumas, Poe and Shakespeare likewise be shoved out of the limelight in order to glamorize new, sapling workd of budding young authors? The same applies to works of science fantasy or fiction.

Only the test of time proves the true merit of anything cultural, such as literature, motion pictures, plays, etc. Reprinting perhaps one proven classic in each issue would not be a waste of paper at all. Instead it would serve as an instrument of study to those examining the growth and modernization of science fiction and fan-

(Concluded On Page 156)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What is Indecency in a Book?

OR WHO IS OBSCENE?

As a great defender of books in our courts asks more pungently in the title of a recent book of his.

America suffers of a vast variety of censorships—state, federal, local—

But the most insidious of all censors we have found is the average American bookdealer himself.

When we first brought to him James Joyce's ULYSSES he held up his hands in pious horror. A few years later, when the book was D. H. Lawrence's LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER, he held up his nose as well as his hands. He sells *both of them* now that they have become modern classics.

The same reception was accorded our reprint of Charles-Louis Philippe's BUBU OF MONTPARNASSE. Even Nobel Prize Winner T. S. Eliot's *Introduction* didn't help. For the bookdealer this great work remains nothing more than a chronicle of the lives of men and women who make up the sidewalk traffic of Paris.

When, more recently, we came to the bookdealer with Michael Sadleir's FORLORN SUNSET the delicacy had become class-delicacy. This great author's previous work, *Fanny By Gaslight*—which concerned itself with the predominately vicious amusements of the rich—was allowed to be pyramided into best-sellerdom. Because FORLORN SUNSET shows with great care the effect of this overwhelming sensualism on the lives of the poor the censorial hands and noses went up again.

THIS IS THE LAST STRAW. We have come to an important departure in our 25 years of publishing. As of this day

We will sell our books BY MAIL ONLY!

HERE ARE 6 OF OUR CHOICEST TITLES

We will pay the postage on all orders accompanied by remittance.

1 **FORLORN SUNSET by Michael Sadleir.** From a London school where children are trained to cater to the whims of aged Mayfair sensualists the author of **Fanny by Gaslight** makes a thrilling 500-page journey into their stained homes. Only $2.98.

2 **LILA & COLETTE by Catulle Mendes.** The adventures of two conscientious cocottes behind the red lights of Paris. With the Rahnghild illustrations which decorated the original $10 edition. Faithfully reproduced to sell for $1.98.

3 **PASQUERELLA & MADONNA BABETTA by Giovanni Boccaccio.** The dark, terrifying desires of Renaissance Italy lit up in the lives of two sensitive, reckless women. The illustrated $7.50 edition reproduced to sell for $1.98.

4 **YANKEE TRADER by Stanley Morton.** The slaves he bought were often young women and children, all manhandled and outraged to the tenderest. In the mounting agony, one of them is almost rent apart by the teeth of another. 352 pages. Only $2.98.

5 **BUMARAP by Samuel Roth.** Story of the Maharajah and his red-headed mistress with whom our button-hole hero spends 36 hours unmatched in the annals of Casanova. Illustrated. Reduced to $1.98.

6 **BUBU OF MONTPARNASSE by Charles-Louis Philippe.** The pretty little slaves and their male mentors in the sidewalk traffic of Paris described with infinite compassion and pity. Only $1.98.

YOU CAN BUY ONE BOOK OR MORE

ALL 6 BOOKS $12.00

QUANTITIES LIMITED

ORDER IMMEDIATELY

ORDER BY NUMBER

BOOK CLEARANCE CO.
110 Lafayette St., New York 13, N. Y. Z-4

Gentlemen:
I enclose.....for book (s) whose number (s) I check below. I may return for full credit what does not altogether please me.

1 2 3 4 5 6

NAME.....

NO. and STREET.....

CITY.....ZONE.....STATE.....

☐ Let me have the 6 books for $12

☐ Send C.O.D. I enclose $1 as binder & will pay balance to postman

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(*Concluded From Page* 154)

tasy and as a fond remembrance to those old enough to have remembered the stories when they were brand new. I'm afraid I'll have to discontinue reading your very excellent magazine if this is your policy.

Morton Stein
220 Miriam Street
New York 58, New York

Somehow the mention of the wastebasket keeps popping up this month... We never said that the "classic" yarns of stf should be forgotten. Just as the classics of Poe, Dumas, etc, should not be forgotten. And they aren't. You can find the latter in any public library, in book form. Why bring out a magazine when they're so easily obtainable? The same holds true for what you call the great stf yarns. Most of them have already appeared in book form. Why waste space on a magazine rack and try to sell a fan something he can get elsewhere—in much more permanent format? And we'd like to add to your statement that the test of time is the true merit of anything cultural. Wait for another ten or fifteen years. Mayhap you'll be speaking in glowing terms of the terrific yarns of a decade ago! ...We hope you'll continue to be an FA fan, Mort. We wouldn't want you to miss the future classics!.....Ed.

FA REPRESENTS THE BEST

Dear Sirs:

How about a kid getting in on the opinions? I'm only fifteen, but I'm a good s-f fan. FA seems to have the best selection of stories to suit my taste.

I especially like "Vanguard of the Lost", "Elementals of Jedar", and "The Mental Assassins". All of the stories were at least above average.

One suggestion. Among my friends, and with most science-fiction fans, Ray Bradbury is recognized as one of the best s-f writers of the day. I think it would be nice to find some of his stories in FA.

Another of my favorites is Geoff St. Reynard. I consider his story "The Usurpers", one of best possible quality.

Would you be kind enough to answer a question? What ever happened to the stories on werewolves, vampires, etc. I like fantasy equally as well as stf, but the ghost type is fading from view.

One feature (unpublicized as it is) in FA which appeals to me is "Fables From The Future" by Lee Owens. Judging from the style he uses in these short shorts, a regular story by him should be good.

Ending my first critical attempt, I would like to say that I hope Bill Tenn can coin better words than "Flirgleflip" from his future stories.

Bobby Pope
Box 181 (Station A)
Charleston, South Carolina

We're glad to have you join the gang, Bob. As to the werewolves and vampires, that's an interesting point. We'd like some more reader reaction on the subject. For while the above types are definitely fantasy, they are also in the weird category. What's the vote? .....Ed.

RADIATION "FEELER"

★ By A. MORRIS ★

THE GEIGER counter for detecting nuclear and atomic radiation is now a household word. The government has gone out of its way to encourage the manufacture and distribution of these handy little gadgets. They'd be so nice to have around in case of an atomic war.

But even Geiger counters are complicated and relatively expensive, not to mention delicate. But the California Atomic Energy Project has come up with a very simple radiation detector that doesn't use any electrical circuits or radio tubes. All it consists of is a series of vials filled with liquids which turn different colors dependant upon the amount of radiation they are exposed to. Such a handy affair can be made up into a package a little bigger than a dog tag and can be carried everywhere as a reliable indicator of trouble. Besides they're extremely cheap.

They depend upon the fact that chloroform, that familiar anaesthetic releases definite quantities of acid upon being exposed to radiation. So the chloroform, is placed in a glass vial along with a quantity of "indicator", a yellow organic dye which changes color depending upon the amount of acid present. The radiation attacks the chloroform, the dye reacts with the released acid and by examining the colors of a few different tubes it is possible to tell whether or not you've been exposed to a lethal dose of atomic radiation.

Such an apparatus would be mighty handy to have around. Unlike a photographic film which will also detect radiation no developing is necessary, nor can knocking around injure the vials.

While we're not worried about atomic radiation now, the little gadget is useful around x-ray machines and fluoroscopes, where the chances of getting an overdose of gamma rays is high.

You'll probably see the device on the market fairly soon.

★ ★ ★

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FABLES FROM THE FUTURE

★ By LEE OWENS ★

HYDROGEN TO HELL!

THIRTY YEARS ago it was not uncommon for science-fiction writers to make use of an unproved scientific theory in the background of their stories. Daringly they suggested that science might one day bring a piece of the sun to Earth—it having been suspcted that the sun's energy was provided by the conversion of hydrogen to helium. What a tremendous weapon this might make!

Well, like so many other "dreams" of the science-fiction writers, this skeleton has come back to haunt them—this time in no dream at all, but in sheer, horrible reality!

The scientific journals have known this fact for a long time; the energy of the sun—like that of many stars—comes from a peculiar nuclear reaction whose significance we are now beginning to appreciate. It seems that if you take four hydrogen atoms whose total mass is about 4.032 subject them to right heats and pressures, the familiar substance helium, will result. The mass of helium is about four. What happened to the difference of .032? Very simple—it became energy according to the famous Einstein law, E equals m times c squared.

In the sun this is happening to countless trillions of trillions of atoms per second and as a result the sun spews out horse-power at a furious rate.

With these known facts, and with the success of the uranium and plutonium atomic bombs under their belts, the physicists have asked themselves if they can't perhaps make the hydrogen-helium conversion work. And frankly, they believe they can. Right now men all over the world are working on the idea and the proposal to do an enormously costly research will soon go to the president.

But so what, you say. What's the difference between a uranium and a hydrogen bomb?

The difference is enormous. The effective area of a hydrogen bomb may be a hundred or a thousand times that of the uranium bomb. With an ordinary atomic bomb, criti-

"DO YOU WANT TO BECOME A HEQUAZ NUMEROLOGIST?"

Something New *Something Different*

TAKE OUR NEW ADVANCED COURSE IN
"HEQUAZ SYSTEM OF NUMEROLOGY"

SOMETHING THAT WILL COMMAND BIG MONEY In this course you are trained to interpret numbers and letters of the alphabet, to indicate the time future events will occur, without allowing the client to talk until the Forecast is completed.

We will advise and help you until you feel confident of your work. If you wish to come and have personal instructions this can be arranged.

At the completion of your studies and passing of your test you are awarded a certificate.

NO ONE CAN USE THIS SYSTEM OF NUMEROLOGY WITHOUT THIS CERTIFICATE

Act Now!

ENROLL AND BECOME ONE OF OUR SUCCESSFUL GRADUATES

HEQUAZ CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL OF NUMEROLOGY

268 North State Street Dept. E Marion, Ohio

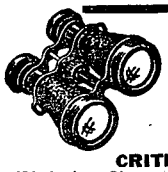
Without cost or obligation, please send me full particulars about the "HEQUAZ SYSTEM OF NUMEROLOGY."

Name..... Age.....

Address..... Type of Work.....

City..... State.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



BINOCULARS
MADE IN GERMANY
Precision ground lenses and center focusing gives exact eye adjustment, large 42 MM objectives. 8 mile range. Strongly built. Weight 7½ oz. Extra wide field of view. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Postpaid..... **$3.95**
CRITERION CO., Dept. DB 2
438 Asylum St. Hartford 3, Conn.

"RUTHBELLA MY BELOVED" it's T.N.T.
Famous Sanskrit Love Diary. "Hardened girl meets suave lover . . . love and passion at their stormiest". The reading thrill of your life. FREE book list included. Order today. Prepaid, we pay postage, or C.O.D. plus postage
Published at $5.00 Now **$1.00**

POET'S CORNER Press
Dept. A 436 CENTER ST., FORT LEE, N. J.

THE MODEL MISS
California's lovely models photographed by professional photographers. In the studio with Speedlights or outdoors along the shores of the blue Pacific, in beautiful natural settings. Truly beautiful!
2¼ x 2¼ negatives..... 4 for $2.00
4 x 5 negatives..... 3 for $3.00
Color slides and black and white prints—prices on request.
The MODEL MISS
5844 Compass Drive, Los Angeles 45, California

ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS
Sell our ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS and other NOVELTIES. Each booklet size 4½ x 2¾. We will send 25 assorted booklets prepaid upon receipt of $1.00 or 75 assorted booklets sent prepaid upon receipt of $2.00. Wholesale novelty price list sent with order only. No orders sent C.O.D. Send Cash or Money-order. Repsac Sales Co., 1 Orchard St., Dept. 40-J, New York 2, N.Y.

Have you entered your subscriptions to:
AMAZING STORIES
MAMMOTH WESTERN
FANTASTIC ADVENTURES
24 monthly issues now only.....$4.50
12 monthly issues.....$2.50
ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING CO.
185 N. Wabash Ave. Chicago 1, Illinois

cal masses of uranium must be brought together for any effect at all to occur. There is no change of making "large" or "small" atomic bombs of uranium.

But that isn't the case with hydrogen. Theoretically, there is no limit in size to the hydrogen monster. Perhaps a thousand square miles could be wiped as clean as ten! And why not, since we know that the very stuff of the sun is in effect a gigantic hydrogen bomb?

And there is plenty of hydrogen, that's clear. And so the atomic race is on in another horrible way. For undoubtedly elsewhere men are thinking in the same terms. It was even a German project during the second World War—which fortunately didn't get very far.

Now however, in light of the success with nuclear fission, we can expect to see some astonishing new developments—to our sorrow...

★ ★ ★

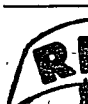
OVERLOAD...

A PROBLEM which will have to be solved in the not remote future concerns the storage of knowledge. In plain simple English, we know too damn much!

That sounds like an exaggeration. It isn't. The libraries of the world are jammed with tens of millions of books, technical papers, research reports and God knows what. In spite of a dozen different methods of abstracting certain journals, not one one-hundreth of this vast flood of knowledge is suitably catalogued so that a scientist planning to do a bit of research, can put his finger on all the work that has been done before him. As a result he is likely to waste years of time and sums of money before he reaches a stage which has probably already been done!

This sad state of affairs is due to the fact that so much is known, so much work has been done, that no one man or agency can be aware of it all.

Yet, something or someone has to be aware of it all. Steps are being taken to



ANY AMOUNT NECESSARY WITHOUT HARMFUL DRUGS—EXERCISE—OR STARVING

You'll enjoy the warm weather better without the fat that makes you feel tired, breathe heavily or perspire too much.
It's easy to follow the simple plan and take 2 tablets between meals.
TREX-OL is compounded under strict laboratory supervision and works on a principle much different from other reducing methods. For example: How many times have you put water to boil, forgotten about it, and then found an empty pot because the water had formed into steam and evaporated? Most people don't know it, but a lot of energy is stored in their body fat. With this in mind, the TREX-OL CO. developed a plan for making body fat work to restore energy. In other words, just as water gives out steam and evaporates—fat can give out energy and disappear. Besides all this, the TREX-OL plan with its nutritional values, curbs appetite at meals and between meals for rich fattening foods. So, the TREX-OL way, you lose weight, gain energy, added pep and stamina, and most important of all better health and happiness
Prove this truly wonderful TREX-OL plan to yourself, on our money back guarantee. SPECIAL OFFER: Enclose this ad and receive a 20 day supply instead of the regular ten day supply. ACT NOW! This DOUBLE-FOR-YOUR-MONEY offer may not be repeated again.
Pay postman $2.00 plus postage, or send $2.00 and save postal charges. If you think you are very heavy, we suggest that you send for our extra special offer of a 60 day supply for $5.00.

TREX-OL PRODUCTS CO.
P. O. BOX 31—5 CORNERS STATION DEPT. E JERSEY CITY 8, N. J.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make this so. And since the human mind can't hope to cope with such enormous volumes of thoughts and ideas, a machine must be devised.

This overload of learning will eventually be catalogued, micro-filmed, cross-indexed and centralized, so that a man attempting to undertake a research project, will go to a central bureau, ask for all the known information on, oh, say "pumps"—make it "vacuum pumps" and immediately he will be given a complete triple-indexed list of references of everything about vacuum pumps. All the information from any part of the world will be so available. If Yocky-Dock in Smedlitz, Bulgaria has discovered a certain principle, that will be just as available as the latest output of Distillation Products, Inc. In other words, the researcher will be kept up to date so that he won't have to duplicate some unknown problem which has already been solved.

This ideal state of things isn't here yet. It will be a long time before it is. But it is coming, that's for sure. And the ingenious calculating and recording machines are going to be the workhorses of this technique.

The librarian of the future won't wear horn-rimmed glasses—she can't—for she's bound to be a machine!

★ ★ ★

THE STEAM-HAMMER

CONSCIOUSNESS did not come to it at once. One moment it was an unthinking mass of metal, dutifully performing its function. It had always been that and it would always be that...but...

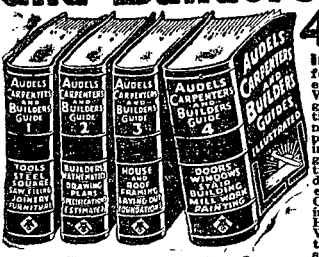
When the bolt of lightning struck the factory building it jumped to the ground through the nearest and highest and easiest point. That the steam-hammer happened to be that point was no fault of its own. The electric pulse coursed through it in a single burning surge of wild technology.

The steam hammer looked the same the next day and the same the next and so on. But some subtle change had wrought a reaction on its molecules. Yes, it dutifully absorbed the glowing billets of metal and pounded them between its ugly jaws, squeezing them into shape between dies, placed there by the puny things of flesh which made it.

First it experimented. At night when all the shop was dead and quiet, experimentally the mighty tool would flex its metal muscles and the hammer would come down on empty dies like a clap of thunder. The nightwatchman reported the strange event, but the foreman just chewed out the operator for leaving the steam lines open slightly. And in its unconscious way the hammer understood—and maybe it laughed to itself.

"I tell you, Mike, that baby's not workin'

AUDELS Carpenters and Builders Guides 4 vols. $6



Inside Trade Information for Carpenters, Builders, Joiners, Building Mechanics and all Woodworkers. These Guides give you the short-cut instructions that you want—including new methods, ideas, solutions, plans, systems and money saving suggestions. An easy progressive course for the apprentice and student. A practical daily helper and Quick Reference for the master worker. Carpenters everywhere are using these Guides as a Helping Hand to Easier Work, Better Work and Better Pay. To get this assistance for yourself, simply fill in and mail FREE COUPON below.

Inside Trade Information On:
How to use the steel square—How to file and set saws—How to build furniture—How to use a mitre box—How to use the chalk line—How to use rules and scales—How to make joints—Carpenters arithmetic—Solving mensuration problems—Estimating strength of timbers—How to set girders and sills—How to frame houses and roofs—How to estimate costs—How to build houses, barns, garages, bungalows, etc.—How to read and draw plans—Drawing up specifications—How to excavate—How to use settings 12, 13 and 17 on the steel square—How to build hoists and scaffolds—skylights—How to build stairs—How to put on interior trim—How to hang doors—How to lath—lay floors—How to paint.

AUDEL, Publishers, 49 W. 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.
Mail Audels Carpenters and Builders Guides, 4 vols., on 7 days' free trial. If OK I will remit $1 in 7 days and $1 monthly until $6 is paid. —Otherwise I will return them. No obligation unless I am satisfied.

Name_____
Address_____
Occupation_____ ZIP
Employed by_____

Photo Developing & Printing
8 Exposure Roll . . . 40c
Enlarging—8x10 print 40c
Photo Copies, Camera Supplies, Camera Repairs
Jay's Photo Service
500 S. Eastmont Ave., Los Angeles 22, Calif.

DO YOU WANT TO **STOP TOBACCO?**
Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have with Tobacco Redeemer. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved many men.
In Business Since 1909
300,000 Satisfied Customers
THE NEWELL COMPANY
284 Clayton Sta., St. Louis 5, Mo.
FREE BOOK

STOP ATHLETE'S FOOT $1
RELIEF from cracked, hot, sweaty feet due to athlete's foot is yours with PEDOSAL. Used successfully for over 15 years by men and women both civilian, military and workers in factory or farm. 6 month supply. Money back guarantee. POST PAID
FREE Send for literature on important pharmaceuticals for men and women. **PEDOSAL**
CAROL DRUG CO. DEPT. D • BOX 1557 • SANTA BARBARA, CAL.

BOOKLETS The kind grownups like. Each one of these booklets is POCKET SIZE, also contains 8 ILLUSTRATIONS, and is full of fun and entertainment. 12 of these joke booklets, ALL DIFFERENT, shipped prepaid upon receipt of $1.00, or 24 BOOKLETS ALL DIFFERENT shipped prepaid for $2. cash or money order. No orders sent C.O.D. Print name and address and mail to:
Treasure Novelty Co., Dept. 36-J, 2 Allen St., New York 2, N. Y.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKKEEPERS Earn EXTRA MONEY $20 to $400 (A MONTH FOR YOU)
WORK FULL OR PART TIME FROM HOME OR OFFICE
Our proved plan and Simplified System for small businesses can show you the way to Big Earnings with your own bookkeeping service. NOT a course of instruction. Hundreds of bookkeepers are NOW using our PLAN successfully. Details FREE to sincere, qualified bookkeepers, who are willing to work hard for Rich Rewards.
TAX SAVER SYSTEM, Dept. E, FORT WORTH 2, TEXAS
Publishers of the Original copyrighted simplified bookkeeping system for small businesses and professions

ILLUSTRATED BOOKLETS & NOVELTIES
Our VEST POCKET series of ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS are full of humor with ILLUSTRATIONS. The NOVELTIES are the kind MEN want for EXCITEMENT and AMUSEMENT. 10 DIFFERENT booklets and 6 DIFFERENT novelties sent prepaid on receipt of $1.00. No C.O.D. orders or checks accepted. WHOLESALE PRICE LIST included with orders only.
LIVE WIRE NOVELTY CO., Dept. 8-J
3 Orchard Street New York 2, N. Y.

NERVOUS STOMACH ALLIMIN relieves distressing symptoms of "nervous stomach"—heaviness after meals, belching, bloating and colic due to gas. ALLIMIN has been scientifically tested by doctors and found highly effective. More than a ¼ billion sold. At all drug stores.
ALLIMIN Garlic Tablets

BE A DETECTIVE
WORK HOME or TRAVEL. Experience unnecessary.
DETECTIVE Particulars FREE. Write
GEO. Z. WAGNER, 125 W. 86th St., N.Y.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Song Poems

POEMS wanted to be set to music. Free examination. Send poems today to McNeil, Master of Music, 510 ZD South Alexandria Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

SONG Poems wanted. Percentage basis collaboration. Terry Tune Master, 709½ Cl N. Broadway, Oklahoma City 2, Okla.

SONGWRITERS needed. For Free details write, Merit Music Co., 1538½ N. Wilcox Ave., Hollywood 28, Calif.

Miscellaneous

MAGAZINES (back dated), foreign, domestic, art. Books, booklets, subscriptions, etc. Catalog 10c (refunded). Cicerone's Center, 86-22 Northern Blvd., Jackson Heights, N. Y.

SCIENTIFICTION weird, fantastic: books, magazines. Werewolf Bookshop, 1508A Riverside Dr., Verona, Pa.

WOULD you pay 3% first $350 made? Free illustrated book "505 Odd, Successful Businesses" free. Work home. Expect something odd. Pacific 5M, Oceanside, Calif.

WHERE to buy 800,000 articles direct from manufacturers. Save by buying direct. Sent Free. "Your Profits Under the Spot-light." Glass Pub. Co., Ellwood City 23, Pa.

SURPRISE Package. 40 tricks and professional catalogue 50c. Vanishing coin 25c. Plastic Jump up Rabbit in hat with name engraved 25c. Magiden, 716-Z Pine, St. Louis, Missouri.

NEWEST money making sensation. Sell personal initialed belts, buckles, cap and breast badges, tie holders, etc. Choice 2000 emblems. Write Special outfit offer today. Hook-Fast, Box 1425ZD, Providence, R. I.

SENSATIONALLY new illustrated comic novelty booklets surprise you and knock your friends for a triple loop! Send postcard for detailed listings. 25c brings sample, rebate card, other offers. Raghuman's, Dept. A, 760 Putnam Ave., Brooklyn 21, N. Y.

IMAGINATION? 12 story-telling photos, of flying discs, weird worlds, vampires and real ghosts. Bizarre, exotic, professional. $2 postpaid. Fantasy Fotos, 579 Bridgeway, Sausalito, Calif.

FREE outfit; write today! Sell embroidered Advertising Uniforms and Work Clothes, Initial Buckles, Belts, Badges, 2000 Emblems. Hook-Fast Co., Box 480ZD, Roanoke, Va.

RECORDS guaranteed new. Hillbilly, Popular, Spirituals, 4 for $1.00. Free record with first order. Free catalog. Maillorc, Dept. 75, 570 N. Gay Street, Baltimore 2, Md.

"INTERESTING Mails," 25c will keep your mail box full three months. Bentz, Jr., Desk B/32, Chatawa, Miss.

right," the operator complained, "she don't feel right. There's somethin' wrong. That thing needs an overhaulin'."

But the foreman just laughed and said it was nerves and forgot about it.

And the hammer waited quiescently, for it knew what it wanted. One day it would test the feel of other things besides hot metal in its jaws...

Perhaps the complete conscious thought wasn't there, but everyone knows machines have character, so it can be believed.

And then one day the chance came. As the machine knew it must come.

"We're changing dies today," Mike said. "Lock your valves and get goin'."

The operator stood well aside while a couple of laborers manipulated the vehicle crane which lifted out the dies. One laborer crawled between the jaws and went to work on the huge nuts which fastened the die to the anvil. The great black machine loomed up ominously—in Mike's eyes at least.

And then it happened. The steam-hammer sensed the soft mass of flesh and tissue between its jaws. And however it does such a thing, it laughed a little to itself.

"Look out!" screamed Mike, but then it was too late and the hammer came down and the live, little thing between the jaws was no more than a blob...

That was a long time ago, and now the steam hammer is sitting outside in a junk yard, weathering and rusting slowly, but its rudimentary consciousness is still sustained by what happened then. It thinks gleefully on how the inquests showed that the accident couldn't possibly happen...but it did happen...and the machine seems to move a little...just a little...but it seems to move...

★ ★ ★

THE SHOCKER...

I PICKED up a scientific magazine not long ago and thumbed through it. In this day and age it is hard to become enthusiastic about so many "new, amazing, terrific" scientific inventions, when they come at us at such a rapid clip. But when I put down the magazine, I realized that truly, I had sen the beginning of a new world.

To begin with, the article was by an eminently respectable man, Dr. Claude A. Shannon, a prominent, competent scientist in the field of communications. His work is world famous and generally speaking he can write his own ticket. While he works for a famous company, doing research in telephonic communications, he is of such a caliber that anything that strikes him as "pure research" he can do.

With that background you might expect that the title of his article would be "The

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gamma-Factor...etc..." But it wasn't. Very simply—and astoundingly—it was called, "A Chess-Playing Machine". And it all makes sense.

Dr. Shannon is a member of the elite group of scientists who are concerned with the new science of cybernetics, the science of control and communications, the branch of physics which is determined to find out the nature of the thinking process, a matter a lot closer to physics than to biology.

In the article, Dr. Shannon, nonchalantly, matter-of-factly discusses the nature of an electro-mechanical device for playing the enormously complex game of chess. Step by step he shows how such a machine must function. By implication he tells us that such an apparatus will be built.

But even this is not the really shocking portion of the article. That deals with his statement about the nature of thinking machines. If a machine can be built which will play a game of chess so well that it can beat poor or even mediocre players—though not the finest—can it not truly be said that the machine "thinks"? Step-by-step, this inexorable logic is followed through, until at the end of the article we are certain that this is the case. No matter how primitive, nor how basic and elementary, our machines are gradually duplicating the thinking process.

I looked up from the article with a peculiar feeling. Little chills ran up and down my spine. Man has always regarded himself as the one thing in the world which even science shyed away from, labeling him "as too complex."

But not anymore. The physicists, the cyberneticists, the biochemists, are probing deeper and deeper; the structure and technique of thinking is being bared to the scalpel and the encephalograph, and in terms of metal and electricity, Man is creating himself in his own image. Now it is only chess-playing machines—but what of fifty or a hundred years from now?

I put down the article with mingled pride and relief. Even as I made myself a cup of coffee, I tried to think of something I could do that a machine couldn't—and I didn't have a very successful time of it...

★ ★ ★

U-BOOT NEMESIS

SLITHERING UNDER the icy waters of the Baltic Sea, cutting through the Pacific white-caps, knifing Polar waters, are hosts of the dreaded *Unterseebooten*. They don't call them that any more, of course. A grim red aura surrounds them now. But they lurk the seven seas, waiting, ever-waiting...

SUPERIORITY FOR YOU

MENTAL-PHYSICAL

$1 WITH THIS AD

OMNICO

P. O. BOX 72 NEW YORK 2, N. Y.

30 POWER SUPER SCOPES!

A SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENT

Extends to 36 inches. Precision and Polished Lenses. Ideal for Studying Stars, Plane Spotting, etc. Satisfaction Guaranteed or Money Refunded. Send Check or Money order to

CRITERION CO., Dept. D-19
438 Asylum St., Hartford 3, Conn.

$2.95 Postpaid

QUIT TOBACCO!

Remove all tobacco craving safe in every form and join the thousands who have obtained satisfactory freedom from tobacco with TOBACCO BANISHER. Send for FREE BOOKLET describing the ill effects of tobacco and our safe reliable home treatment, a proven success for 38 years.

GUSTAF H. GUSTAFSON CO.
2326 E. Vickery Blvd. Dept. FG Ft. Worth 3, Texas

HOLLYWOOD Model of the Month

A beautiful Hollywood Model is selected each month . . . and portrayed in 5 glamorous color poses. Send for "Miss August" Now!

Set of 5 Color Slides.....$2.00
Set of 5 Fine Grain Negatives.....1.00

Address all orders to

JAMES J. BRADFORD

1302 Broadway Burbank, Calif.

OLD LEG TROUBLE

Easy to use Viscose Home Method. Heals many old leg sores caused by leg congestion, varicose veins, swollen legs and injuries or no cost for trial if it fails to show results in 10 days. Describe your trouble and get a FREE BOOK.

F. V. VISCOSE COMPANY
140 North Dearborn Street, Chicago 2, Illinois

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

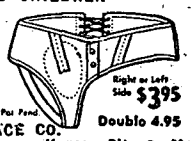
LAUGH! HOWL! ROAR!

Keep your friends in stitches with this new novelty sensation. A realistic "true to life" noise maker that is creating GALES of laughter from coast to coast. This metal laugh machine can be used over & over again. ORDER TODAY! SUPPLY LIMITED! Send no money. Pay your Postman ONLY 49c plus postage on arrival. Send your name and address to BENLEE SALES, 262 N. Fulton Ave., Mt. Vernon, N. Y.

RUPTURE-EASER

FOR MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN

A strong, form fitting, washable support. Back lacing adjustable. Snaps up in front. Adjustable leg strap. Soft, flat groin pad. No steel or leather bands. Unexcelled for comfort. Also used as after-operation support. Give measure around the lowest part of the abdomen. Specify right or left side or double. We pay postage except on COD's. PIPER BRACE CO. 308 East 12th Dept. ZD-85 Kansas City 6, Mo.



WANT TO BE A MERCHANT SEAMAN?

$195 APP. AV. MONTHLY OR MORE PLUS FOOD OVERTIME LODGING

STARTING PAY TRAVEL-ADVENTURE CAREER AT SEA ON AMERICAN SHIPS

NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED. EX-SERVICEMEN MAY QUALIFY FOR SHIP'S OFFICERS

For Information WRITE TODAY to:
MERCANTILE INFORMATION BUREAU
Box 6954-P Baltimore 16, Md.

ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS

THE KIND MEN LIKE!
(VEST POCKET SIZE)
They are loaded with rare cartoons. Full of Fun and Humor. 20 DIFFERENT booklets sent prepaid for $1 in plain sealed wrapper. No C.O.D.'s.
GRAYKO, Dept. 1941 Box 520, G.P.O., N.Y.C. 1

THRILLING—SNAPPY

CUBAN-MEXICAN
Art Pictures • Books • Miscellaneous • Samples • Lists, Etc.
50c, $1, $2
JORDANART, BOX 1265-C BOSTON 4, MASS.

When the last war was ended the Germans had a fleet of submarine vessels of terrific power, speed, steadiness, armed with ship-seeking acoustic torpedos, equipped with the protecting air-breathing "schnorkel," and prepared to sweep our shipping from the oceans.

We beat the German submarine menace in 1944 even though we suffered grievous losses. The Allied Air Forces and Navies managed to trounce soundly the deadly minions of the Nazis. But the Germans had made a second effort and had not the war ended in time, they have beaten us. Fortunately they were too late.

But much of their skills and capacities passed into the hands of the present menace to the world peace. All over the Euro-Asiatic world the menacing tramp of the military boot is heard, along with the roar of jet engines and the subtler hiss of hydrogen peroxide-powered submarines.

Are we waiting helplessly? Not by a long shot!

Night and day in the laboratories and arsenals of the democracies technicians toil to devise the U-boat killer! The next war will not be fought alone with rockets and atomic bombs. The submarine is our third greatest menace. We must be prepared to defeat it.

We are building killer vessels—small and fast little ships armed with every sort of detector and weapon known to man. Radar and supersonics tracks down the submarine, rocketry and gunnery plus the missile technique applied to torpedos blows him from the water.

Robot observers have been built capable of sensing the almost silent menace of the submarine; these immersed cylinders sit deep in the icy, freezing watery graves and radiate back to ships the location of any unknown objects. Like an underwater radar screen, the U.S. has far-flung tentacles able to grasp and crush a would-be attacker.

Yes, the U.S. is prepared to act once more as the nemesis of all under-water skulkers...

THOUSANDS EVERYWHERE ACCLAIM THIS

New Psychology Of Life!

Have you unrealized hopes? Are the better things of life always just beyond your reach?

Times have changed—but have you? Adopt a new psychology of life and MASTER YOUR PROBLEMS. It takes no greater mental effort to *achieve results* when you know how.

Let the Rosicrucians show you how, by the use of simple laws, you can apply the powers of your mind to bring about startling changes in your life. If you are sincere in your desire, write for the free Sealed Book. It will point out how you may obtain this most helpful information. Address: Scribe V.G.H.

The Rosicrucians (AMORC)
SAN JOSE CALIFORNIA

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ruthless vengeance — hate — love and raw passion . . . these emotions ruled the men and women who braved the open ranges of the great American West.

You'll join in the action—thrill to the danger—smell the gun-smoke and share the glory of the outriders who helped mold a mighty nation with sweat and blood and hot lead . . . Read, every month

MAMMOTH WESTERN

All Stories Complete — by Leading Writers

TOPS IN WESTERN FICTION

ON SALE AT YOUR NEWSSTAND NOW!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW SENSATIONAL OFFER TO MYSTERY NOVEL FANS!

FREE

WITH MEMBERSHIP IN THE DOLLAR MYSTERY GUILD

ALL 4

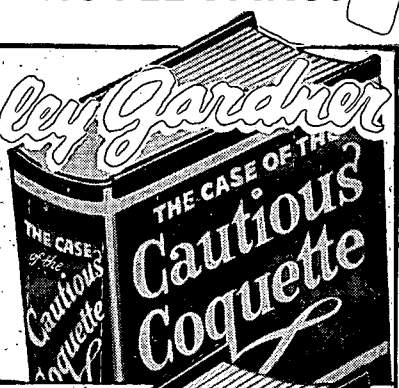
OF THESE NEW, COMPLETE

MYSTERY NOVELS

(EACH VOLUME SEPARATELY BOUND)

"The Case of the Cautious Coquette"—by

Erle Stanley Gardner



PERRY MASON MEETS A GORGEOUS BLONDE JINX!

Not even the great Perry Mason was quick enough to outmaneuver the glamorous blonde who jinxed every man she met—or married! ALSO IN THIS BIG VOLUME are *TWO* brand-new Erle Stanley Gardner mystery novelettes! Publisher's edition, $2.50.

"Cat of Many Tails"—by

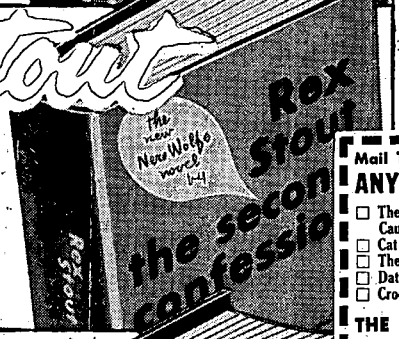
Ellery Queen

ELLERY BAITS A TRAP—WITH A GIRL!

New York City shuddered with hysteria as the incredible "Cat" murders mounted—until Ellery Queen started his own investigation . . . his only clues a strangling cord made of silk and the fact that *each new victim was younger than the last!* Publisher's edition, $2.75.

"The Second Confession"—by

Rex Stout

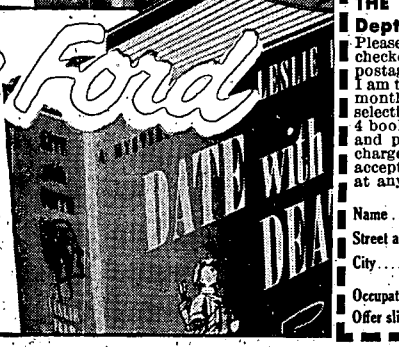


NERO WOLFE DEFIES THE UNDERWORLD!

The strange case stirred Gotham's "Great Brain" from his big house for the first time in many months—but only because the cold voice that spoke on the telephone next day was that of *the only man in the world Nero was afraid of!* Publisher's edition, $2.50.

"Date With Death"—by

Leslie Ford



MURDER NEVER MISSES AN APPOINTMENT!

The man tossed the pistol to the cringing young girl and said: "Shoot me or love me, baby!" Outside the cottage all was silence; then there was a blast and the man fell dead. Which was incomprehensible, for he had *made sure the gun wasn't loaded!* Publisher's edition, $2.50.

OR you may substitute any of the following titles if you wish:

CROOKED HOUSE *by Agatha Christie*
A WREATH FOR RIVERA *by Ngaio Marsh*
THE DISHONEST MURDERER *by Frances and Richard Lockridge*
BELOW SUSPICION *by John Dickson Carr*
NOT NEGOTIABLE *by Manning Coles*
WHERE THE SNOW WAS RED *by Hugh Pentecost*

Yes, just mail the coupon and you will receive four new mysteries *free* with membership in the Dollar Mystery Guild, the amazing book club which offers you separately-bound mysteries at the unbelievably low price of $1.00 each. That's right, you pay only $1.00 each—*postpaid*—for fine editions of the best new full-length mysteries—at the same time they are retailing for $2.25 *and more* in the publishers' editions!

Each month the Guild's editors select TWO mysteries which are tops in suspense, drama and brilliant detection. You read about these thrilling books in *Clues*, the Guild's exciting magazine which will come to you each month. If you don't want a selection, you merely notify us and it will not be sent. You do not have to take a book each month—only *four* a year from 24 or more to be offered!

Why not join the Dollar Mystery Guild now and get FOUR new mysteries FREE with membership? Mail the coupon *today!*

Mail This Coupon

ANY 4 FREE WITH MEMBERSHIP

- ☐ The Case of the Cautious Coquette
- ☐ Cat of Many Tails
- ☐ The Second Confession
- ☐ Date With Death
- ☐ Crooked House
- ☐ A Wreath for Rivera
- ☐ The Dishonest Murderer
- ☐ Below Suspicion
- ☐ Not Negotiable
- ☐ Where the Snow Was Red

THE DOLLAR MYSTERY GUILD
Dept. 8ZD, Garden City, N. Y.

Please send me FREE the FOUR books I have checked above and enroll me Free (no fees—no postage—no dues) in the Dollar Mystery Guild. I am to receive **Mystery Guild Clues**, the club's monthly bulletin, so that I may decide which selections I want to accept. I need take only 4 books a year (out of 24 or more to be offered), and pay only $1.00 each (we pay all shipping charges) as my sole membership obligation. After accepting 4 books I may cancel my membership at any time.

Name .....
Street and No. .....
City ..... Zone ..... State .....
Occupation ..... Age if under 21 .....

Offer slightly different in Canada: 105 Bond St., Toronto 2, Ont.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED